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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

“ANTI-BODIES”: INKAS AND AMAZONIANS THINKING OTHERWISE

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

VISUAL STUDIES

by

Alexandra Macheski

December 2023

The Dissertation of Alexandra Macheski is approved:

Professor Carolyn Dean, Chair, Visual Studies

Professor Amanda Smith, Literature

Professor Yve Chavez, Art History

Peter F. Biehl
Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

“Anti-Bodies”: Inkas and Amazonians Thinking Otherwise

Alexandra Macheski

My dissertation traces the life of forest materials from Amazonia into the Andes and beyond to illuminate how the Inkas of the Andean highlands (Western South America) imagined Amazonia and its inhabitants before and after Spanish colonization (c. 1400–1825 C.E.) and, conversely, how Amazonian peoples understood the Inkas and other “invaders,” including colonizing Spaniards and modern tourists. Interaction between the highlands and Amazonian lowlands has been little studied in general, with most interest focused on the realm of political relations and trade. Although the field of visual studies has largely ignored this subject, there is ample visual evidence that Amazonia played a significant role in the Inkas’ imaginary as a place of both subversion and refuge. Likewise, while there is limited Amazonian artifactual and ethnohistorical documentation from the periods in which the Inkas and later Spaniards attempted to control forest peoples, there is sufficient material to suggest a general Amazonian approach to unknown and possibly hostile others.

Briefly, as will be discussed in the second half of this dissertation, the Amazonian strategy was to integrate unknown peoples into their relational cosmology. Ideally, and whenever possible, the integration was accomplished through “friend-making,” a process that intended to forestall hostility and foster mutually beneficial relationships.

My study of cross-cultural exchanges between the Inkas and neighboring Amazonian peoples engages with the multi-sensorial aspects of forest materials in the

form of wooden drinking vessels (*keros*), exquisite boxes to hold herbs and sweets (*coqueras*), and Amazonian textile designs (*kené*) by living artists to help us understand the ways the Inkas and Amazonian cultures adapted to one another, creating and reinforcing each other's alterity across time.

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INTRODUCTION

The “Anti-Body:” Inkas and Amazonians Thinking Otherwise

Topic and Research Questions

The Inka empire, called *Tawantinsuyu*, (c. 1400–1535 C.E.), meaning “four parts united,” extended from Colombia to Chile and included parts of Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. This dissertation examines Inka interactions with the peoples of Antisuyu, which is how they referred to one of the quarters of their empire. Antisuyu comprised the heavily-forested areas mostly to the east of the Inkas’ capital of Cusco. Forest material and imagery were ubiquitous in Inka culture, both before and during the Spanish colonial period (c. 1400–1534 and 1534–1825 CE), yet within scholarship on the Andes, Amazonia is a continuously veiled subject, frequently mentioned, but rarely the focus of prolonged discussion. While Amazonian inhabitants occupy a marginal role in the scholarship on the Inkas, in the Inka imaginary, Amazonia played a substantial role as a disordered place filled with cannibals and dangerous animals. At the same time, it was a valued land full of exotic and “magical” substances.

For the imperial Inkas, Amazonia represented both a fearsome and desirable territory. How the Inkas later translated this ambivalent subaltern for themselves and for new Spanish audiences has yet to be given extensive consideration. Even as the Inkas were themselves “othered” under Spanish colonization, the Inkas created “another Other” by re-imagining their neighbors to the east, the peoples of Amazonia, in ways that advanced Inka interests. This study considers the ways the Antisuyu of

the imperial Inkas was reimagined in light of colonial realities. I argue that the Antis, the inhabitants of Antisuyu, were visually characterized as not only dangerous and uncivilized, but also as non-Christian (if not anti-Christian). By doing this, Inka imagery both implicitly and explicitly characterized the Inkas themselves as good, civilized Christians and closer in behavior and belief to Spaniards than they were to the Antis. So, while Spaniards classified all of the autochthonous inhabitants of the Americas as “*indios*” (Indians), the Inkas worked vigorously to trouble that homogenizing notion.

In addition to analyzing how and why the Inkas “othered” Amazonians, my dissertation also addresses the Amazonian view of, and response to, the Inkas and other later invaders, a topic that has yet to be broached in the scholarship to any significant degree. Documentation from Autonomous-era Amazonia¹ is non-existent, and from the colonial period is exceedingly scarce. As a result of this dearth of written materials, I turn to other sorts of texts, such as artifacts of chonta wood, a forest material that was turned into Inka *keros*, or wooden beakers, as well as other hardwood palms used to make *coqueras*, which were small wooden boxes used to hold coca, yerba maté, or sweets.² To close this manuscript, I will turn to the

¹ Following the visual studies scholar Aubrey Hobart, I use the term “Autonomous” to describe the era prior to European colonization in the Americas. This term will be discussed further below. See, Hobart, “Treasures and Splendors: Exhibiting Colonial Latin American Art in U.S. Museums, 1920–2020” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2018), 14.

² I follow the Amazonian ethnographer Michael A. Uzendoski who maintains that, “textuality involves various multimodal practices”; these include storytelling, dance, music, and ritual. To this list I add visual culture. See, Uzendoski, “Beyond Orality:

contemporary Shipibo of the Peruvian Amazon to shed light on Amazonian-Inka relations today. Shipibo textiles with patterns known as *kené* that are made for touristic consumption speak to histories of cultural interactions between the forest, the Andes, and beyond.

By juxtaposing the Inkas and Amazonians, I endeavor to employ both Andean ontology, which is to understand the potential complementarity that every opposition offers, and also Amazonian perspectivism, a recognition that there are multiple sides to every story, or, quite possibly, multiple stories with just one side. Obviously, both Andean and Amazonian ontologies are complex and will require lengthy discussion in the chapters that follow.

Geographic, Temporal, and Cultural Scope

Geographical scope

The geographical regions spanned in this dissertation include South America's west coast, the Andean highlands, and western Amazonia. Chapters One and Two focus on the Central Andes.³ The Andes names mountain ranges of high peaks extending from Ecuador through Peru, western Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. The term "Central Andes" describes the area now comprising the country of Peru, which is where Cusco, the Inkas' capital, is located.

Textuality, Territory, and Ontology among Amazonian Peoples," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 55, n. 3.

³ Although the Andean region includes the high, heavily forested eastern slopes of the Andes mountains, this region has often been ignored in Andean Studies, which tends to focus on the highlands and the coast. Here I use the term Andes or Andean only in reference to the highlands and coast, reserving Amazonia or Amazonian for reference to the forested zones to the east.

Roughly, this dissertation’s spatial scope replicates that of Tawantinsuyu, whose four parts (or, *suyus*), radiated outward from Cusco. Tawantinsuyu’s upper half, or *hanan*, consisted of Chinchaysuyu and Antisuyu; the lower half, or *hurin*, comprised Condesuyu and Quyasuyu (Figure i). The borders of Tawantinsuyu, especially those of Antisuyu are notoriously difficult to ascertain. The Inkas did not practice mapping in the Euro-American tradition and we have only archaeological remains and scattered ethnohistorical sources to gauge the extent of the Inkas’ occupation of Amazonia.



Figure i. Map of Tawantinsuyu. Image from: *The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830*, ed. Elena Phipps et al. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art: New York, 2004), xiv.

The Inkas considered their empire to be in a state of perpetual growth. This is demonstrated in the “Mapamundi del Reino de las Indias,” credited to the Indigenous Andean chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (Figure ii).⁴ In his “Mapamundi,” straight lines emanate from Cusco, dividing the empire into four suyus. Guaman Poma presents Antisuyu in the east, Quyasuyu in the south, Condesuyu in the west, and Chinchaysuyu in the north. While Chapter One discusses this map in detail, for now it is important to note that Antisuyu is depicted as stretching to the Atlantic Ocean; in fact, the lines that define the left and right borders of Antisuyu go beyond the eastern shores, extending to the upper corners of the map. While this is seen most clearly on the solar side, a close look reveals a faint line stretching into the lunar corner as well. Guaman Poma’s depiction of an ever-expanding Antisuyu differs significantly from Euro-American maps where Antisuyu’s boundaries are confined, even though, as is widely acknowledged, they are not completely known (Figure i).

⁴ A contract, part of a set of manuscripts now generally referred to as the Naples documents, have caused some to question Guaman Poma’s authorship of the drawings and writings currently credited to him. The contract indicates that the exiled mestizo (Spanish–Inka) Jesuit Blas Valera purchased the use of Guaman Poma’s name. There are some doubts about the contract’s authenticity, however. Given the highly personalized nature of Guaman Poma’s work, I regard it as largely or entirely his work. For a transcription of the contract, see Laura Laurencich Minelli, *Exsul Immeritus Blas Valera Populo Suo e Historia et Rudimenta Linguae Piruanorum: Nativos, Jesuitas y Españoles en Dos Documentos Secretos del Siglo XVII*, trans. Yolanda Sabaté (Chachapoyas, Perú: Municipalidad Provincial de Chachapoyas, 2009), 235–236 and Plate XXXI.



Figure ii. Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, “Mapamundi del Reino de las Indias,” *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*, 983–984 [1001–1002], c. 1615, ink on paper.
<http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/1001/en/text/?open=&imagesize=XL>.

A general Google search for maps of Tawantinsuyu presents the many ways in which Antisuyu is currently plotted (Figure iii).⁵ Antisuyu is generally hard to chart due to forest growth covering Inka structures, the difficulty of conducting archeology in Amazonia in general, and lack of archaeological funding for, or interest in, the Inkas’ forested frontier. Likewise, the extent of Antisuyu was in constant flux and understood as a contested border zone. This will be discussed in detail in Chapters One and Two.

⁵ For an excellent synopsis of mapping Tawantinsuyu, see: César W. Astuhamán Gonzáles, “The Concept of Inca Province at *Tawantinsuyu*,” *Indiana* 28 (2011): 79–107.

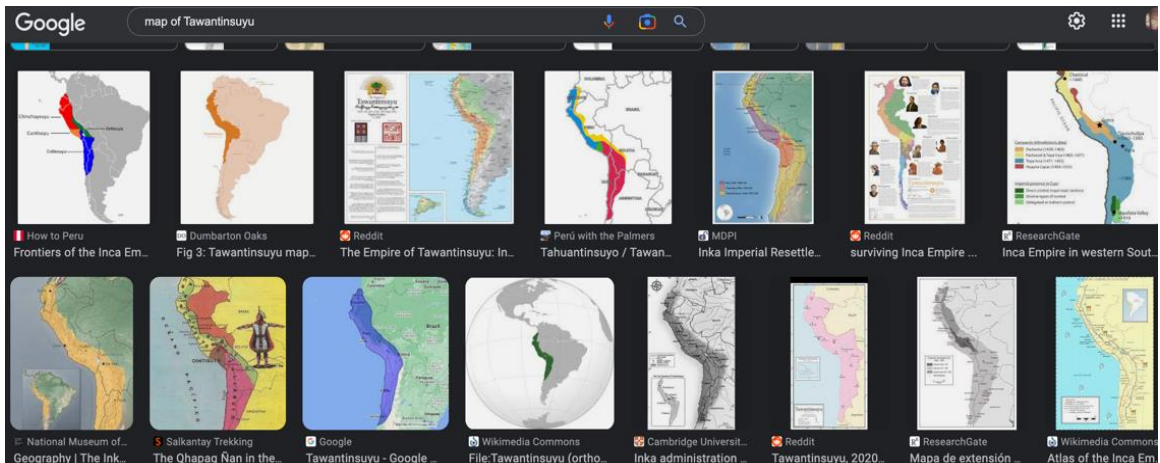


Figure iii Google search by author for maps of Tawantinsuyu, June 22, 2023, [Google Images](#).

The difficulty in charting the Inkas’s Antisuyu reverberates in attempts to map Amazonia in general. Amazonia is not just a sprawling tropical rainforest but also includes savanna, deforested planes, and metropolises. Amazonia covers thirty-five percent of South America and stretches from Brazil in the East to Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia in the West, touching Venezuela, Guyana, and Suriname in the North and reaching to Bolivia in the South (Figure iv).



Figure iv. Map showing the location of the Amazon basin. Image from: World Wildlife Organization, “Amazon,” <https://www.worldwildlife.org/places/amazon>.



Figure v. Schematic cross-section Pacific coast; the Andean highlands; the rainy eastern slopes of the high jungle, montaña, or ceja de selva; the western tropical lowlands of the Amazon basin. Drawing by author.

The generally accepted term “Amazonia” signals the conceptual and conditional nature of the forest’s extent, which the Latin Americanist Amanda M. Smith describes as an area of “fluidity and fluctuation.”⁶ Smith aptly points out that maps of Amazonia reveal more of the cartographer’s perceptions rather than an acceptance of the ebb and flow of river beds and the possibility that social relations extend Amazonia to areas outside of the forest.⁷ Clearly, Amazonia in its fullest extent exceeds the scope of this current project. Here I am interested in Amazonian-Inka relationships, as well as later relationships that take place in the contact zone of the high forest. This area is identified as “montaña” in the schematic cross-section of Andes-Amazonian geography (Figure v); I also provide a list of geographic terms that will be used throughout this dissertation:

⁶ Smith, *Mapping the Amazon: Literary Geography after the Rubber Boom* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), 4.

⁷ Smith, *Mapping the Amazon*, 5.

- *Antisuyu*: the eastern half of Tawantinsuyu’s hanan sector; the home of the Antis.
- *Ceja de selva*: “fringe of the forest,” the area between the montaña and selva with dense clouds and heavy rain.
- *Highlands*: the dry and cold Andean peaks; also high, intermontane plains and valleys.
- *Montaña*: the Amazonian piedmont of the eastern Andean cordillera in the Peruvian Andes. This area is a thickly forested region from about 5,000 to 30,000 meters in altitude.⁸
- *Selva*: “forest,” the Amazonian lowlands in general.
- *Yungas*: a term referring to the montaña in Bolivia. The Inkas used “yungas” to refer to lowlands in contrast to their highland home; thus, to the Inkas yungas could refer to coastal zones as well as Amazonia.

Temporal Scope

This dissertation touches upon a considerable breadth of time from 1400 C.E. to 2022 C.E. Chapter One examines Inka-Amazonian interactions from the Late Horizon (c. 1400–1535 C.E.), which I broadly refer to as the “Autonomous era,” and Chapter Two extends into the Colonial Period (c. 1534–1825 C.E.). I use the term

⁸ For extended discussion, see: Darryl Wilkinson, “How Real is the Andes-Amazonia Divide? An Archaeological View from the Eastern Piedmont,” in *Rethinking the Andes Amazonia Divide: A Cross-Disciplinary Exploration*, ed. Adrian J. Pearce et al. (London: UCL Press, 2020), 130.

“Autonomous era” as proposed by the Art Historian Aubrey Hobart to define “that period of history during which the Indigenous people of the Americas governed themselves without interference from any other continent.” Using “Autonomous era” offers a promising path away from problematic labels such as “pre-Colonial,” and “pre-Hispanic,” which mark European contact as the pivot point of Indigenous history.⁹

Chapter Three considers Amazonian perceptions of others (the Inkas and the Spanish) from both the Autonomous era and the colonial period, specifically when Jesuit missionaries occupied some forest lands (c. 1572–1767 C.E.). The dissertation will conclude by considering the present moment, in the 2020s, in asking how Amazonian art by living artists can be read as a response to a long history of forest inhabitants being “othered.” By attending to contemporary Amazonian voices, I hope to illuminate how current “otherings” of Amazonia are an inherited legacy with roots dating back to the Autonomous era.

Cultural Scope

Chapters One and Two consider the Inkas’ relationship with the Antis before and during Spanish colonization. “Anti,” a Quechua term used by the Inkas, was commonly written as *Ande* by the Spanish; originally, it designated peoples inhabiting the montaña region northeast of Cusco. As Tawantinsuyu grew, the term came to encompass peoples of the Amazonian piedmont of the eastern Andean Cordillera.

⁹ Hobart, “Treasures and Splendors,” 14.

Alongside Anti, the term *Chuncho* (*Chunchu*) was used to describe people of the eastern forests. These terms are interchangeable in colonial chronicles and are used according to the author's location. In general, Anti was the term used by peoples in the Cusco region, whereas Chuncho was popular farther south.¹⁰ More specifically, the Quechua demonym "Anti" refers to speakers of the Arawak languages in southwestern Amazonia, but because the Inkas saw Antisuyu as ever-expanding, the term likely was broadened to include forest inhabitants beyond Arawak lands, where many diverse languages were spoken.¹¹

The latter half of this dissertation (Chapters Three and Four) draws on Amazonian cultures broadly in order to discern patterns of behavior and prevailing attitudes towards the Inkas and others. Chapter Three includes perspectives from the following: the Urarinas (Peru), Jivaro or Shuar (Peru and Ecuador), Omagua (Ecuador), Kichwa (Ecuador), Kanamari (Brazil), and peoples of the Chiquitos and Moxos missions (Bolivia). Chapter Four focuses on the visual culture of the Shipibo peoples of Peru in Iquitos and Pucallpa.¹²

Chapter Organization and Abstracts

Organization

¹⁰ Carolyn Dean, *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 214.

¹¹ Wilkinson, "Incas and Arawaks: A Special Relationship along the Andes-Amazonia Frontier," *Andean Past* 13 (2022): 265.

¹² Given the scope of this project, readers will encounter a number of Indigenous language terms in this manuscript; please refer to the note on orthography and glossary at the end of the dissertation.

The lengthy history of “othering” Amazonia is best traced chronologically, from the Autonomous era to today. I divide my dissertation into four chapters. The first two chapters focus on the Inkas’ relationship with Amazonia; Chapter One concerns the Autonomous Inka, while Chapter Two considers the Inkas in the Spanish-colonial period. The second half of the dissertation—Chapters Three and Four—illuminate Amazonian perspectives across time from the period of Inka dominance to the present. The transition between halves of the dissertation shifts our point-of-view from the highlands into Amazonia. Thus, although we begin by looking at Amazonia, which is a perspective embedded in both Andean and European histories, we end with Amazonia looking outward in a way that responds to Amazonian ontologies and ways of knowing. Overall, this dissertation aims to bring Amazonians together with *their* many “others,” as they existed in the past and still do in the present.

Chapter Abstracts

Chapter 1: Rough Interiors: Inka-Anti Relations in the Autonomous Years

Chapter One considers cultural interactions between the forest and the highlands during the Autonomous era—primarily focusing on Inka-Anti relations. Perhaps because Antisuyu was the most challenging of the four suyus to conquer and hold on to, it became the most desired and most conflicted place in all of Tawantinsuyu. Antisuyu was also the least known of the empire's four parts; in many ways, it essentially became a creation of the Inka imagination. This chapter identifies key Inka narratives of alterity that can be heard, felt, and seen in their carving of unruly forest trees into orderly drinking vessels known as keros. I argue that while keros, as used in Inka feasts, epitomized reciprocity, their materiality and abstract designs conveyed Inka superiority and power over Antisuyu, a land they could not conquer. Because the wood embodied the forest, and by extension irascible forest-dwellers, to fashion a kero—to carve its form and incise its exterior—was to exert symbolic control over Antisuyu and Anti people.

Chapter 2: Polished Exteriors: Inka-Anti Relations in the Colonial Period

Chapter Two traces the pronounced stylistic transformation of keros during the Spanish Colonial Period. During this time, keros rose in popularity and their exterior decoration was reconceptualized to include figural motifs and narrative scenes from the (imagined) Inka past, often incorporating forest themes and depictions of Inkas in battle with Antis. A pigmented forest resin known as *mopa mopa* not only colored these designs, but also helped convert the kero's woody

porousness into something lustrous and impermeable. In turning our attention to the Inka's use of mopa mopa and forest imagery, we will see that the Inkas responded to Spanish settler colonialism and their own conversion into subalterns by creating the Antis as "sub-subalterns" whose evocation underscored Inka-Spanish alliances.

Chapter 3: Forested Intentions: The Sociality of Chonta

While Chapters One and Two focus on the ways the Inkas "othered" the Antis, Chapter Three considers how Amazonians perceived and interacted with the Inkas and later Spanish Colonial others. Drawing on Amazonian ethnography concerning materiality, the senses, and constructions of alterity, this chapter discusses the ways forest wood extended the amicable reaches of the forest and, as trade items, sought to transform potential foes into a network of friends. In turning attention towards things that originate in the forest but have lives outside of it, I trace the "friend-making" journeys of wood in the form of keros and coqueras. Both wooden forms possessed personhood and so served ambassadorial functions for Amazonia, rendering what was new into the known, forging friendships, and locating "others" in a vast chain of forest relationships that sought to integrate all vibrant beings, both human and otherwise.

Chapter 4: Kené: Pathways for the Forest

This chapter posits that Amazonian strategies, which were historically employed in response to both Inka and Spanish incursions into the forest, reverberate into the twenty-first century. I focus on Shipibo textile designs, known as kené, which are marketed to tourists in Iquitos and other forest locations in northeastern Peru and

sold globally via the internet. I demonstrate that, functionally, kené parallels the keros and coqueras of earlier periods. Moreover, I maintain that, although there is a long and oppressive history of efforts to silence “Anti” voices, forest peoples continue to speak through and alongside forest materials. What’s more, we can “hear” them speak once we know how to listen.

Method, Approach, and Key Terms

My study focuses on works of visual culture, their materials, processes of production, and imagery. In dealing with the latter, I am guided by the well-worn art historical method of iconography. The renowned art historian Erwin Panofsky defines iconography as “that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form.”¹³ One risk entailed in iconography is that of creating imaginaries from images. If one misinterprets an image during a pre-iconographical phase, then the resultant iconography—the meaning-making system—is invariably flawed. Pre-iconography, or the first step of perception, is especially difficult when dealing with abstract or conceptual imagery, or imagery from outside the interpreter’s own visual tradition. So, in my exercise of iconography, I remain wary of pre-iconographical mis-readings. Still, attempting to identify the “what” of kero imagery proved essential to my task of

¹³ Panofsky, “Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art,” in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 220. Previously published as “Introductory,” in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* by Erwin Panofsky, 3–32 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

determining its “why,” which is to understand why forest motifs were evoked by the Inkas in keros and by Amazonians in coqueras, what ends that imagery served, and how it changed over time.

I created a digital archive of over 100 Inka keros in an effort to discover similarities in their design and form. I also visited museum collections to look at, touch, smell, and engage with keros (to the degree allowed by museum authorities, of course). My work with keros included drawing every visible aspect of them, making note of cracks or tool marks, and pondering what those “scars” might tell me about the treatment of forest wood as a living being, and its relationship to the imagery.

I enhanced my iconographical studies by broadening my understanding of Indigenous concepts, which are best expressed through native languages. In preparation for writing this manuscript, I studied Quechua, or *Runasimi*, which is the language of the Inkas and is widely spoken today.¹⁴ Diego González de Holguín, a Spanish Jesuit priest (1560–1618) who authored an early seventeenth century Quechua dictionary (1608) entitled *Arte Diccionario Qquechua-Español*, served as my source for colonial Quechua.¹⁵ Although limited, my ability to understand Quechua has opened avenues of thought that can at least approximate those of the Inkas.

¹⁴ I thank Amanda M. Smith for teaching me Quechua over the course of three years. Añay Amandacha.

¹⁵ González Holguín’s dictionary, ed. Raúl Porras Barrenechea, was published as *Vocabulario de la Lengua General de todo el Perú llamada Lengua Qquichua o del Inca* (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 1952).

As a visual studies scholar, I adopted an interdisciplinary approach, leaning on ethnohistorical accounts to inform my research. Of the many I consulted, the most revealing was that of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, who was mentioned above for his *Mapamundi* (Figure ii). Guaman Poma, a descendant of noble Yarovilca ancestry from Huánuco, Peru, claimed to be of royal Inka ancestry as well. He produced a hefty manuscript of over 1000 pages, including 397 illustrations, in which he recounted a history of the Andes before the arrival of the Spanish and offered a critique of colonial governance after the fall of the Inka empire. His text, *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* (c. 1615), includes biographies of the Inka kings and queens and discusses different events, ceremonies, and aspects of daily life (including cultural practices, economic activities, political roles, etc.) that shaped the Andean space prior to and during his lifetime.¹⁶ His tome, meant for the eyes of Spain's King Felipe III, advocated for Andean self-rule and condemned Spanish colonial administration. In using colonial sources, such as Guaman Poma and González de Holguín, I recognize that, like all accounts, they reflect the authors' points of view with their particular interests and biases. I have been careful to take into account the ways their positionality many have inflected their perspectives.

An invaluable aspect of my research project involved travel to Lima, Cusco, and Iquitos, Peru. Aside from the study of museum collections, my goal was to

¹⁶ Guaman Poma, *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* (1615), MS GKS 2232 4º, ed. John V. Murra and Rolena Adorno, trans. by Jorge L. Urioste (Copenhagen: Royal Library, 2001), <http://www5.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/info/en/frontpage.htm>.

observe contemporary Andes-Amazonian relations and to feel what it is like to travel from the coast, to the highlands, and then into the low-laying tropics. While in Peru, I enjoyed conducting studio-visits and interviewing Amazonian painters, including Christian Bendanyán, Henry Pinedo, Rember Yahuarcani, and Brus Rubio, to ask about the ways their art responds to a history of colonization and cultural interactions.¹⁷ I also had the pleasure to talk with Shipibo textile artists about *kené* and their feelings about ayahuasca tourism. The insights I gained from these conversations figure into the arguments made in Chapter 4.

Among the many experiences that informed my research while in Peru, a fourteen-hour hike on the Inka road to Antisuyu gave me a better understanding of the Inkas's way of experiencing the land. Also invaluable, were countless hours in the forest where I touched, communicated with, and sat among *chonta* trees. Lastly, my experience in Iquitos enabled me to experience being first "other" and then "friend."

As a scholar of European descent, a responsible, decolonial approach to interpreting cultures and histories other than my own, guides my research.¹⁸ In this work, I am interested in bringing to light cultural interactions veiled by Inka imperial and Spanish colonial rhetoric. An approach advocated by the Indigenous education

¹⁷ I thank Dennis Ferguson Acosta for aiding in translation and accompanying these visits.

¹⁸ My interest in this project is in decolonizing scholarship, but I understand that for many Indigenous peoples "decolonization" is focused on the repatriation of land currently in the hands of settler colonists. For a discussion on the term decolonial, see Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.

scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, consists of listening carefully to Indigenous voices.¹⁹ Smith's approach acknowledges different types of "fragmentations" within Indigenous cultures, mostly caused by colonization, de-territorialization, the extraction of resources, disempowerment, and also "disciplinary conquest," a term first introduced by the historian Ricardo D. Salvatore.²⁰ In exercising a decolonial approach to my scholarly work, I view Indigenous objects as Indigenous subjects, relying on ethnographic materials to inform my research. I depend on contemporary Indigenous voices to produce a more nuanced understanding of material culture than is generally possible in historical research focusing on times when, and places where, extensive records were not kept or have not survived.

Enacting intellectual decolonization was greatly assisted by the work of the anthropologist Macarena Gómez-Barris, who searches for what she calls "submerged perspectives" within extractive zones that have colonial histories.²¹ She argues that submerged perspectives can help decolonize South American histories and mediate between the exchange of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges. The anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena shows us ways to access those "submerged perspectives," if we care to listen. De la Cadena, looks for "partial connections" to

¹⁹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2012), 40.

²⁰ Salvatore, *Disciplinary Conquest: US Scholars in South America, 1900–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

²¹ Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

understand intra-relationships as fractals instead of units.²² An example of seeing relationships as units would be to categorize peoples into one of two groups, colonizer or colonized. In contrast, when one looks at partial connections in the form of fractals, dualistic ways of looking dissolve, and scholarship becomes more nuanced. Evoking binary oppositions that characterize the European intellectual tradition, serve only to recreate Indigenous ontologies in European terms. The concept of fractality, in contrast, asks us to refuse fixed binaries and seek out flexibility and transformation within an interlinked, ever-repeating and infinitely complex system. Many scholars have evoked the notion of fractality, including Els Lagrou,²³ whose work in Amazonia alongside those of others, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The search for submerged perspectives and partial connections relies on an empathetic understanding of the materials. The art historians Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn use the term “subject-object” to signal a material’s potential to have subjecthood and agency.²⁴ Following their work, I regard the “objects” studied in my dissertation as potential subjects and adopt a decolonial tack by trying to speak *from*, the things I study rather than *for* them. The term “subject-object” lends itself nicely to both Inka and Amazonian ways of seeing sentient materials that engage in social

²² De la Cadena, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 32.

²³ Lagrou, “Learning to See in Western Amazonia: How does Form Reveal Relation?,” *Social Analysis* 63, no. 2 (June 2019): 24–44.

²⁴ Dean and Leibsohn, “Scorned Subjects in Colonial Objects,” *Material Religion* 13, no. 4 (2017): 416.

relationships. The Indigenous anthropologist Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree) describes how there are webs of social relations between material things and human beings within Indigenous epistemology:

An Ingenious epistemology has systems of knowledge built upon relations between things, rather than on the things themselves ... It is important to recognize that the epistemology includes entire systems of knowledge and relationships. These relationships are with the cosmos, around us, as well as with concepts. They thus include interpersonal, intrapersonal, environmental and spiritual relationships, and with ideas ... Indigenous epistemology is our systems of knowledge in their context, or in relationship.²⁵

In the Amazonian context, where plants such as wood have subjecthood, the term “perspectival ontology” is often used to describe the world in which personhood belongs both to human and to other-than-humans. The anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s theory of perspectivism presents a way to understand Amazonian objects as subjects; the term perspectivism describes the perception that all things (people and other animals, plants, minerals, sounds, things) have their own understanding of reality, but that reality differs according to culture and species.²⁶ Perspectivism invites myriad ways to think about “otherness” since it acknowledges other-than-human viewpoints and highlights different experiences by reorienting perspectives. Using perspectivism in a study of trade materials offers a critical entry

²⁵ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2008): 74.

²⁶ “Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 3 (1998): 469-88.

point in my reading of how Amazonian subject-objects performed when traded or taken from the forest.²⁷

Other scholars whose work on Amazonian perspectives has proved to be particularly useful to this study are a number of anthropologists and ethnographers, including Eduardo Kohn, Els Lagrou, Fernando Santos-Granero, and Michael A. Uzendoski.²⁸ Across the chapters of this dissertation, in acknowledgment of the plurality of selves and the move to encourage an anthropology of a larger set of social relationships, I choose to use the term “other-than-human.”²⁹ The term “other-than-human” intends to avoid the human exceptionalism of the European intellectual tradition and invites an understanding that subject-objects have varying degrees of agency and are a part of transformative social relations between persons, human and otherwise. For highland Andean understandings, I rely heavily on the ethnographic work of Catherine J. Allen, whose insights help me understand complex topics like “going inside,” and the difference between instantiation and representation.³⁰

²⁷ Viveiros de Castro, “Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies,” *Common Knowledge* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 466.

²⁸ Refer to the bibliography for the works by each of these authors that were used in the course of this dissertation.

²⁹ For a discussion of this term and alternatives, see Marianne Elisabeth Lien and Gisli Pálsson, “Ethnography Beyond the Human: The ‘Other-than-Human’ in Ethnographic Work,” *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 86, no. 1 (2021): 4.

³⁰ Allen, “The Inkas Have Gone Inside: Pattern and Persistence in Andean Iconography,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 42 (Autumn 2002), and “The Living Ones: Miniatures and Animation in the Andes,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2016). What Allen calls “instantiation” Dean refers to as “presentation”; see, *Culture of Stone*, 26.

Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui reminds us that a decolonial academia must consist of both discourse and practice.³¹ In an effort to practice decolonial scholarship I acknowledge the term “Indigenous,” along with broad uses of Indigenous terms and concepts, can flatten and homogenize distinct cultures. To be clear, when I use the term Indigenous, I am referring to the Indigenous Andean and Indigenous Amazonian cultures particular to this dissertation's geographic, cultural, and temporal context. Furthermore, when using Indigenous concepts, I will make a concerted effort to be as culturally specific as possible. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that I will never understand exactly how the Inkas or Amazonians perceived one another, if indeed there was (is) a unitary view, but I believe that it is through looking and listening to Indigenous peoples and materials that we can uncover often marginalized or ignored histories. While my own positionality inevitably constrains my approach to Indigenous material culture, I can at least attempt to decolonialize my thinking, both in theory and in practice.

My dissertation builds on the research of scholars who have investigated the Inka kero in relation to its form and designs. Most relevant to my project is the art historian Cristiana Bertazoni Martins' dissertation, which investigates Inka-Amazon relations in kero imagery. Bertazoni explores forest imagery in Inka keros to demonstrate that the Inkas had contentious relations with Amazonia and that the

³¹ Rivera Cusicanqui, “*Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization*,” in “Autonomy and Emancipation in Latin America,” ed. Alvaro Reyes, special issue, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 95–109.

cultural divide between the Inkas and the forest was a construct of alterity.

Bertazoni's research presents one of the first studies of Inka keros that clarifies Inka-Anti relations and extensively brings Amazonia in conversation with the Inkas.³²

With regard to keros more generally, the work of the art historian Thomas Cummins is foundational. He suggests that, for the imperial Inkas, keros were symbolically persuasive objects that encompassed "promise and threat, in relation to order and disorder in Tawantinsuyu."³³ He also posits that, in the colonial period, kero imagery spoke to both Inka and Spanish audiences about Autonomous Andean history and provided a visual source for Andean resistance.³⁴ Overall, his seminal book on keros is the largest detailed exploration of Inka wooden beakers; it has proved essential to this project.

While this dissertation builds on the art historical research of both Bertazoni and Cummins, I bring a particular focus on materiality to the discussion. I add to their work by introducing the kero as a subject-object and an embodiment of the forest itself. In addition to keros, this dissertation considers coqueras, which were also produced from Amazonian hardwoods. To date coqueras have not been given extensive consideration beyond that found on museum websites and brief descriptions

³² Bertazoni, "Antisuyu: An Investigation of Inca Attitudes to their Western Amazonian Territories" (PhD diss., University of Essex, 2007).

³³ Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 91.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

in exhibition catalogs.³⁵ I hope this dissertation will prompt a closer look at these little wooden boxes who traveled far beyond their forest home.

The final chapter of this manuscript relies heavily on contemporary studies of Shipibo textiles and ayahuasca tourism. I am indebted to the anthropologist Luisa Elvira Belaunde who has published many articles and books on Shipibo culture.³⁶ Belaunde is a feminist scholar who focuses on processes of change and the interconnections that are apparent in the Shipibo textile art of making kené. Her work amplified Shipibo efforts to include kené as part of Peruvian patrimony. I build on Belaunde's research by connecting the Shipibo art of kené to an extensive history of exchange with colonial others.

Final Remarks

In this dissertation I offer new interpretations of the ways Amazonian alterity functioned in the visual cultures of the Andean region before, during, and after European colonization. Because hegemonic non-Amazonian interlocutors, from imperial Inkas to modern tourists, have worked to silence or submerge voices from Amazonia, I endeavor to shed new light on Amazonian responses to being “othered” in particular ways. In this latter effort, Amazonians will be listened to and not just spoken about. My dissertation is thus a significant expansion in Amazonian-Andean

³⁵ For excellent descriptions of coqueras see: Cristina Esteras Martín et al., “Andean Style in the Secular World,” in *The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830*, ed. Elena Phipps et al. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 341-44.

³⁶ Refer to the bibliography for Belaunde's work used in this study.

studies, which has only recently begun to recognize the cultural importance of Amazonia within the history of the Inkas and beyond. I offer nuanced thinking about how Indigenous cultures create and engage with cultural difference, and how intra-Indigenous hierarchies functioned across time. To summarize, my research contributes to Andean-Amazonian Studies by the following means: 1) through rethinking the ways materials records can speak their own histories, as well as the histories of those who interacted with them; 2) by considering keros, coqueras, and kené as subject-objects in relation to Andean and Amazonian concepts of otherness; 3) in troubling how the Inkas, who are often considered the colonized, can also be the colonizer; 4) how inviting conversations of Andean-Amazonian relations act to bridge the scholarly gap between the highlands and low-lying tropics; 5) and lastly, in challenging concepts of alterity in Indigenous Studies. The dissertation intends to provide a much-needed perspective on Amazonian-Inka relations, asking how Amazonians—who, over millennia, have been much talked about—might at long last be heard, at least in part.



Figure 1.1 Chonta trees in Iquitos, Peru, 2019. Photo by author.

CHAPTER 1 | ROUGH INTERIORS

INKA-ANTI RELATIONS IN THE AUTONOMOUS YEARS

1 | 1 INTRODUCTION

In the forests of the Peruvian Amazon, various trees populate the rich, damp earth. The distinctive hard palm, known by the Inkas as chonta, played a significant role in the history of the Inkas' relationship with the inhabitants of forested lands whom they knew collectively as Antis. The most magnificent of the Amazon's palms is the *Bactris setosa cilibaba*, whose long and slender body reaches its crescendo at the spectacular height of nearly 30 feet, where its sparse branches fan out like an umbrella to absorb the heavy, tropical air (Figure 1.1). Radiating outward, the leaves soak up the sun's rays while simultaneously contributing to the forest's canopy, and shading all below.

Although there was timber available throughout Tawantinsuyu, the Inkas preferred the chonta's strength to make a variety of things, including weapons and keros, the former associated with violent aggression and the latter with convivial sociality (Figure 1.2). Chonta was a primary import from the *montaña* and tropical forests deeper in Antisuyu. Colonial Spanish-Quechua dictionaries offer insight as to how the Inkas perceived chonta. Chonta or *chunta* is a catch-all Quechua term for various palm trees or *palma árboles*.³⁷ Chonta also describes something that, or someone who, will not bend to work, something stiff or immovable.³⁸ The hard and inflexible qualities attributed to chonta were applied by the Inkas (and other Andean peoples) to all of Antisuyu, and particularly to Anti peoples.

I begin with the chonta tree growing in the forest, but will conclude with the chonta carved into the form of a kero, a wooden beaker used in Inka feasts.³⁹ I focus on the tree's transformation into a kero to underscore how its design, purpose, and

³⁷ Gonçález Holguín, *Vocabulario de la Lengua General*, 102, 376.

³⁸ According to Gonçález Holguín, the Quechua phrase "*Chunta chunca say huarayani*" translates into Spanish as "*sin doblarse al trauajo estar tieso como vn palo de palma como mojon* (without bending to work, or as stiff as a palm tree, or like a boundary marker [i.e., stiff and unmovable]): see *Vocabulario de la Lengua General*, 70. While chonta timber is very hard, the whole tree in its natural state, rooted in the ground, is very flexible and bends readily with the wind. Likely, the Inka who did not live among palm trees, but knew the palm mainly through its harvested timber, ascribed the stiffness of the timber to the living tree.

³⁹ There is some discussion that palm trees do not contain wood per se. Instead, hard palm consists of bundled parenchymatous ground tissue, see M. V. Parthasarathy and L. H. Klotz, "Palm 'Wood' I. Anatomical Aspects," *Wood Science and Technology* 10, no. 3 (September 1976): 215–29. Even though there is a technical difference between wood and ground tissue, I will follow the popular usage of "wood" with regard to hard palms.

material divulge the ways in which the Inkas imagined Antisuyu as a place whose inhabitants they desired to control. I suggest that carving a kero paralleled the Inkas's efforts to 'civilize' Antisuyu. The Inkas saw themselves as well-organized and civilized while perceiving the Anti peoples as disorganized and savage. The Andean concept of *kamay*, which is typically translated as "essence," will help us understand how the treatment of a tree was thought to bring order to Antisuyu as a whole. Moreover, recognizing the *kamay* of the kero enables us to tell a story of Inka-Anti relations, a story that emerges from the vessel's very being, rather than resting as a decorative inscription on its finely worked exterior surface.



Figures 1.2. Inka kero (L: exterior; R: interior), Late Horizon, wood, H. 11.74 × Diam. 10.16 cm., Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 2004.212, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/319487>.

For the Inkas, as with all Andean cultures, objects can also be subjects. Andean peoples view everything as potentially animate and sentient,⁴⁰ which leads us to consider chonta not only as a trade item, but also as a “subject-object.” (See a discussion of subject-objects found in the Introduction).⁴¹ For the Inkas, trade items, as subject-objects, often served as tools to define selfhood, community, dominance, and difference. The archaeologist George F. Lau asserts that identity or parts of identities (of both humans and other-than-humans) are “mobile and can be appropriated or transitioned into other ontological types, consensually or forcefully.”⁴² I suggest that Anti identity was manifested in the materiality of keros. Moreover, by considering the kero as a subject-object, vitalized by both chonta and forest kamay, I will argue that, within the political showground of feasts, the Inkas used keros to demonstrate the success of their civilizing mission.

This chapter will first establish that chonta wood is a subject-object that is sentient and has agency. Second, I will examine how chonta was transformed into something useful to the Inkas when carved into a kero. Third, I will consider how the keros’ carved designs emphasized social relationships that were integral for the Inka empire to function; in particular, the designs ‘dressed’ the naked and wild Antis, transforming them into civilized subjects capable of participating in social

⁴⁰ Allen, “The Whole World Is Watching: New Perspectives on Andean Animism,” in *The Archaeology of Waka’s: Explorations of the Sacred in the Pre-Columbian Andes*, ed. Tamara L. Bray (Boulder: University of Colorado, 2015), 24.

⁴¹ Dean and Leibsohn, “Scorned Subjects in Colonial Objects,” 416.

⁴² Lau, *Ancient Alterity in the Andes: A Recognition of Others* (London: Routledge, 2013), 11.

relationships. Lastly, I will direct our gaze into the kero to reveal how scars in the wood were, from an Inka perspective, signs of Anti compliance and Inka dominance. This chapter concludes that the dramatic transformation of the chonta tree into an Inka drinking vessel offers a radical understanding of how the Inkas perceived the Antis' stubborn resistance to civilization.

1 | 2 HEART OF WOOD

Since there is a dearth of studies regarding the animacy of chonta wood and keros, I turn to how the Inkas' regard for stone best demonstrates how things can have subjecthood. There are stones that chose to participate in the Inka empire and therefore allowed themselves to be removed from quarries, shaped by Inka workers, and then placed into the walls of Inka structures. There are also stones that rejected Inka control. One example comes from the work Guaman Poma; his drawing titled "El Noveno Capitan: Inga Urcon" depicts a stone with a rope tied around its body for transport (Figure 1.3).⁴³ The words "*Lloró sangre la piedra*" are written on the base of the rock to communicate that the stone resists transport and cries blood in protest. As the image shows, the Inkas pull the stone with ropes while the rock weeps. Once the Inkas recognized the stone's anguish and resisted being a part of their imperial projects, they abandoned it roadside. For the Inkas, subjecthood extended far beyond

⁴³ For more on stones that rejected working with the Inka, see: Dean, "A Rock and an Art Place: The Inkas' Collaconcho in Context," *World Art* 9, no. 3 (2019): 231–58; and Maarten Van de Guchte, "El Ciclo Mítico de la Piedra Cansada," *Revista Andina* 4, no. 2 (1984): 539–56.

stones; everything in the Inka world seems to have had its own perspective and could be agentic, including chonta.



Figure 1.3. Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, “El noveno capitán: Inca Urcon,” *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*, 159 [161], c. 1615, ink on paper.
<http://www5.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/161/en/text/>.

Subjectivity in the Andes is both expansive and nested, such that chonta and all forest dwellers occupy subject positions as does the forest itself. For instance, chonta as a subject, inhabits the forest, but the forest itself is a subject comprising all the subjects that live within it, including chonta subjects, other tree subjects, other plant subjects, animal subjects, human subjects, and so on. The forest and all things in it are co-identified. But more than that, they define each other and are intra-active. De la Cadena evokes the notion of intra-action in her studies of Earth Beings where “reciprocity is not a relationship *between* entities...it is a relationship from where entities emerge, it makes them, they grow from it.”⁴⁴ To clarify, in Andean

⁴⁴ De la Cadena, *Earth Beings*, 103.

phenomenology the individual is always a part of a whole, or in the words of Gómez-Barris:

As a Southern mode of thinking, being and living, Andean phenomenology, by contrast [to Cartesian binaries of the self], starts from another vantage point: it locates the subject in multirelational terms and blurs the binary distinctions between the human and biomatter into porous interactivity. The self is not bifurcated in between an inside and outside, and thus there is no simple divide into distinct formulations of the external other.⁴⁵

Allen expands on the relationships between individuals and their environments to illustrate that entities in a place *are* that place.⁴⁶ She focuses on objects called *inqaychus* (*enqaychus*), which are small, transportable stone figures of camelids; they are micro-subjects imbued with both the kamay and agency of the Earth Being, from which they came.⁴⁷ Importantly, the inqaychu participates in the kamay of the Earth Being and so should be understood as an instantiation, and not a representation, of it.⁴⁸ In sum, chonta was in the forest and the forest was in the chonta. What's more, the chonta might leave the forest, but the forest never leaves the chonta.

Within Andean ontology, in general, it is not strange to find a thing that is a smaller version of a larger thing, or for a thing to undergo a transformation of personhood. Dean, the archaeologist Maarten Van de Guchte, and the anthropologist Daryll Wilkinson all describe “statues” made of sheddings, such as hair or nail clippings, from Sapa Inkas following their deaths; these statues were called

⁴⁵ Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 40–41.

⁴⁶ Allen, “The Living Ones,” 424–25.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 429.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 430. For more information on inqaychus see Jorge A. Flores Ochoa, “Enqa, Enqaychu, Illa y Khuya Rumi: Aspectos Mágico-Religiosos entre Pastores,” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 63, no. 1 (1974): 245–62.

wawqis/huauques (brothers) and perceived to *be* the rulers from whose sheddings they were made.⁴⁹ Sabine MacCormack uses the phrase “continuous identity” to refer to the ways that the kamay of a being remains intact, regardless of external changes: “identity could be conceptualized as continuous even when its expression or representation changed.”⁵⁰ From this discussion we can conclude that chonta wood, whether in its wild and natural state or carved into a vessel or something else, instantiated the kamay of the forest. It was part of the forest’s distributed personhood, a concept developed by the anthropologist Alfred Gell to describe the ways artifacts can be imbued with the agency of their creators.⁵¹

To the concepts of intra-action, continuous identity, and distributed personhood, we can add that of material metonymy, a term that refers to the ways things that are related, or closely associated, become co-identified. From an Inka perspective, all forest things were, to a certain extent, interchangeable as concepts. Chonta, Anti people, forest animals, and other parts of Antisuyu shared characteristics; all were dangerous, savage, chaotic, stubborn, and so on.⁵² Chonta, a

⁴⁹ Dean, *Culture of Stone*, 41–44; Van de Guchte, “Sculpture and the Concept of the Double Among the Inca Kings,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 29–30 (Spring/Autumn, 1996): 256–68, and Wilkinson, “The Emperor’s New Body: Personhood, Ontology and the Inka Sovereign,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 23, no. 3 (October 2013): 419–22.

⁵⁰ MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), 408–409.

⁵¹ Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 103.

⁵² The homogenization of Antisuyu is not unique as the Inkas homogenized each suyu with identifiable characteristics, as I will demonstrate below in my discussion of Guaman Poma’s work.

living part of Antisuyu is just one self in an ecology of selves that is the forest as a whole. To clarify the difference between Antisuyu and Antis, I will use the term “Antisuyu” for the geographical region, whereas I use “Antis” to refer to all things within Antisuyu, humans and other-than-humans alike. “Anti” will be used adjectively to define things of Antisuyu, such that “Anti peoples” refers to human beings who reside in, or come from, the forest.

Quechua idioms reveal homogenizing ways of thinking about wood as well as ways of thinking about peoples who live in Antisuyu’s forested environment, which was very unlike that of the highland Inka homeland. Wood, especially that which is used artifactually, is generically known in Quechua as *k’ullu* (*ccullu*).⁵³ González Holguín’s colonial dictionary indicates that a hard person (*empedernida persona*), can be described as *k’ullu sunqu* (*kullu soncco*).⁵⁴ *K’ullu sunqu* (literally “wooden heart or guts”) describes something or someone who is hard, stubborn, and resistant to rebuke.⁵⁵ As noted above, chonta wood in particular was used to describe something or someone that/who will not bend to work, or is immovable.⁵⁶ Characteristics of wood—obdurate and unyielding—were not only applied to individual people, but also seem to have described the Inkas’ view of Antisuyu overall. From the Inkas’ perspective, it was a difficult place that, by and large, rebuffed Inkas’ attempts at control and organization.

⁵³ González Holguín, *Vocabulario de la Lengua General*, 74.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 74, 290, 309.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

Before the Inkas, Wari peoples imported chonta wood from the forested lowlands to make keros, an object type with a long history in the Andes. The Wari site of Espiritu Pampa (Middle Horizon, 600–1000 C.E.) was located at the center of the piedmont area where the highlands and forest lowlands meet. The site, with access to the Apurimac and Urubamba Rivers, occupied a pivotal location in terms of trade networks between the two regions. From there, vast quantities of chonta were exported to the highlands where they were used to craft various objects, including keros.⁵⁷ By the time of the Inkas (the Late Horizon, 1400–1534 C.E.), forest trade items drove imperialistic efforts to expand into Antisuyu.

The various types of wood native to the Inkas' highland home, such as escollonia (*escollonia*), mesquite (*algarrobo*) and alder (*aliso*), are not as hard as chonta nor are they as dense.⁵⁸ The material qualities of density and wildness that

⁵⁷ Silvana A. Rosenfeld et al., “Beyond Exotic Goods: Wari Elites and Regional Interaction in the Andes during the Middle Horizon (AD 600–1000),” *Antiquity* 95, no. 380 (April 2021): 411.

⁵⁸ Ellen J. Pearlstein et al. mentions a study by wood anatomist Regis Miller, who found that alder, mesquite, and escallonia were all used in kero production. There are also cases where different woods were used to repair keros, a fact that indicates that the type of wood was less important than the shared qualities of wood itself; see: Pearlstein et al., “Technical Analyses of Painted Inka and Colonial Qeros,” *Objects Specialty Group Postprints* (American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works) 6 (1999): 96. Another study by the archaeologist Victor Falcón Huayta argues that eighty percent of colonial keros were of escallonia wood; his work is mentioned by Denise Y. Arnold et al., in “*Hilos sueltos*”: *Los Andes desde el Textile* (La Paz, Bolivia: Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara, 2007), 88. Unfortunately, both Miller's and Falcón Huyata's studies deal with small sample sizes (42 or fewer keros) and focuses on colonial-period keros; clearly, more research is needed. For convenience, I will describe keros as made from chonta as detailed in the museum catalogues and scholarship that I cite. Perhaps, in debating which woods (highland or forest) were preferred, we might more usefully focus on the question of how the qualities of hardwoods in general “speak” to the Inkas' thinking about

these highland woods possess are shared with forest woods, like chonta. They also parallel Inka rhetoric characterizing human Antis as obstinate and difficult to handle. While hardness was a desirable quality in timber, it was not a valued characteristic of the Inkas' human subjects. It might be said that the Inkas thought *with* material like plants, reasoning that people are in some ways like their environmental surroundings or that materials, like wood in general, share qualities with specific peoples and places. The scholar of Amazonian literature Juan R. Duchesne-Winter argues that South American Indigenous ontologies center thinking *with* plants rather than *about* plants.⁵⁹ Although he is a student of Amazonian societies, his sentiments resonate with Andean phenomenology more generally.⁶⁰

Quechua idioms also reveal the ways the Inkas thought about their complicated relationships with forest peoples. The first part of the “H” section of González Holguín’s dictionary, where there is a cascade of thinking about the Antis, is especially revealing. Following *hachha* which means fruitless tree (*arbol infrutuoso*), the author then defines *hachha hachha* as “forested zone or mountains” (*arboleda, o montes*).⁶¹ Then there’s *hachharuna* or “men of the *montaña* [forested

Antisuyu, the most forested place in Tawantinsuyu. For more on the use of non-chonta keros see: Falcón Huayta, “Aproximación a los Queros Incaicos de la Colonia. Un Ejemplar de Estilo Transicional-Formal del Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia del Perú,” *Revista Haucaupata: Investigaciones Arqueológicas del Tahuantinsuyo* 1, no. 2 (May 2011): 45.

⁵⁹ Duchesne-Winter, *Plant Theory in Amazonian Literature* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019).

⁶⁰ See various essays in Adrian J. Pearce et. al, eds, *Rethinking the Andes Amazonia Divide: A Cross-Disciplinary Exploration* (London: UCL Press, 2020).

⁶¹ González Holguín, *Vocabulario de la Lengua General*, 114.

hills], savages without culture, kings, or law” (*hombre amontado saluaje inculto sin rrey y sin ley*).⁶² As we shall see moving forward, the negative sentiments revealed through idioms like *k’ullu sonqo* and *hachharuna* bring to light aspects of Inka-Anti relations in which the qualities of forest plants were conflated with those of forest peoples.

The Inkas understood Antisuyu as a contested territory populated by an impenetrable forest and inhospitable peoples.⁶³ The Inkas expanded Tawantinsuyu through aggressive territorial campaigns using military might as well as subtle persuasion. They encouraged regions to become a part of their empire in exchange for protection, technological advances, and extravagant gifts of valuable items such as textiles and food. But for the people of the forest, these persuasions were largely ineffective. Anti peoples had minimal need for the Inkas’ protection, roads, textiles, or food supplies; they had no use for agricultural terrace technology, sophisticated hydrology, crops specially adapted to highland environments, nor suspension bridges to span deep gorges.

The Anti peoples could not be easily persuaded nor compelled to join Tawantinsuyu since they possessed plentiful resources and the protection of a nearly impenetrable forest environment. Many did not live in permanent cities that required defense, and most did not need the vertical economy on which both coastal and highland Andean peoples depended. As a result, the Inkas’ efforts to annex the forest

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ There were uniquely peaceful relations as well, especially with various Arawak speaking peoples. See: Wilkinson, “Incas and Arawaks.”

were complicated and contentious. Antisuyu consisted of separate chiefdoms of various social complexities. For them, the homogenizing term “Antis” was meaningless.⁶⁴ Hence, the Inkas’ efforts to integrate diverse forest societies were largely unsuccessful, and the borders of Antisuyu, as discussed in the Introduction, remain murky since its boundaries were constantly in flux.

Some archaeological evidence of Inka fortresses found in the Yumba region suggests that force, rather than persuasion, was required to take and keep territory in Antisuyu.⁶⁵ Colonial accounts describe Inka-Anti combat as bloody. If these accounts are to be believed, the decapitated heads of the Inkas’ enemies were sometimes transformed into drinking vessels.⁶⁶ Other stories emphasize the almost supernatural nature of forest combat. The Spanish chronicler Pedro Cieza de León, for example, describes significant Inka fatalities when giant snakes joined in the fight.⁶⁷

In most of these accounts, the Inkas were repeatedly defeated by the Antis

⁶⁴ Some of the smaller groups of the Western Amazon were the Cashibo, Shipibo, and Setebo; the larger chiefdoms were that of the Cocama, Conibo, and Piro. See Warren R. DeBoer, “Buffer Zones in the Cultural Ecology of Aboriginal Amazonia: An Ethnohistorical Approach,” *American Antiquity* 46, no. 2 (April 1981): 375.

⁶⁵ Ryan Scott Hechler, “Over the Andes and through Their Goods: Late Pre-Columbian Political Economic Relations in Northern Ecuador,” in *The Archaeology of the Upper Amazon: Complexity and Interaction in the Andean Tropical Forest*, ed. R. Clasby and J. Nesbitt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2021), 218.

⁶⁶ Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, 256. The act of transforming enemy skulls into keros will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

⁶⁷ Cieza de León, *La Crónica del Peru: Las Guerras Civiles Peruanas* (Madrid: Momumenta Hispano-Indiana, 1985 [1553]), 120.

and only a few societies within the forest were subjugated.⁶⁸ Perhaps the most notably forest group to be incorporated into the Inka empire were the Chachapoyas, who rapidly grew to resent the Inkas' policies. Regardless of Chachapoya revolts, the Inkas secured strategic locations that granted access to the forest's "magical" and medicinal plants, esoteric religious knowledge, and forest goods like hardwoods.⁶⁹

Amazonian anthropologist Anne Christine Taylor postulates that some Inka-Anti wars were part of a "ritual antagonism"; she explains the likelihood that there were, "two forms of opposition between *serranos* ("highlanders") and Amazonians—one inclusive and complementary, linking hierarchically ordered and ritually antagonistic halves; the other exclusive and more selective, rooted in a perception of irreconcilable sociopolitical formulas...."⁷⁰ From the Inkas' perspective, these battles were an expression of *tinku*, an Andean tradition in which two oppositional forces meet in order to determine or reconfirm hierarchies. Regardless of the nature of the combat between Inkas and Antis, blood was spilt on both sides and the Inkas' Antisuyu frontier remained contested.

⁶⁸ Bertazoni, "Representations of Western Amazonian Indians on Inca Colonial *Qeros*," *Revista do Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia da Universidade de São Paulo* 17 (2007): 326.

⁶⁹ Warren B. Church and Andriana von Hagen, "Chachapoyas: Cultural Development at an Andean Cloud Forest Crossroads," in *The Handbook of South American Archaeology*, ed. Helaine Silverman and William H. Isbell (New York: Springer, 2008), 917.

⁷⁰ Taylor, "The Western Margins of Amazonia from the Early Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century," in *South America*, vol. 3, pt. 2, ed. Frank Salomon and Stuart B. Schwartz, *The Cambridge History of Native Peoples of the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 202–203.

Both humans and other-than-humans were involved in Inka-Anti conflicts. The forest, densely populated with trees and undergrowth, made invasion difficult. Chonta was not only part of this obstruction, but was also transformed into weapons like bows and arrows that the Anti peoples used to protect their forest homeland. Chonta was also used by those outside the forest in the manufacture of clubs, as well as a variety of lance-like weapons. Because of its strength, agentic chonta was perceived as a valuable ally to both sides of the Inka-Anti conflict.

Repeated failures to annex Antisuyu were not the only reason why the Inkas conceived of the forest as an impenetrable and dangerous place full of death. The Inkas were highly susceptible to forest diseases such as *rupa* which kills by fever and *uta*, a disease of lesions.⁷¹ But, Antisuyu was also seen as a place of life. With the forest's abundant rainfall and warm temperatures, it nurtured copious flora and diverse fauna that differed significantly from the plants and animals in the frigid highlands and dry desert coasts. In addition to valuable forest commodities like animal pelts, tropical feathers, gold, tobacco, and coca, Antisuyu was a pharmacopeia of medicinal plants and "magical" knowledge.⁷² To the Inkas, then, Antisuyu was an ambivalent place that was both feared and desired. Based on limited, but lived experiences with the forest and its inhabitants, Antisuyu loomed large in the Inka imaginary.

⁷¹ Bertazoni, *Antisuyu*, 108.

⁷² Church and von Hagen, "Chachapoyas," 917.

Perhaps there is no better voice to describe the Inkas' world, and the ways the Antis figured into it, than serrano chronicler Guaman Poma, whose work was introduced in the prior chapter. With its nearly 400 pen and ink drawings, Guaman Poma's work is considered one of the most valuable textual and visual sources that scholars have in (re)constructing Inka ideas about their history and accomplishments. His work opens a window onto Inka attitudes towards Antisuyu and the Antis.



Figure 1.4. Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, “Mapamundi del Reino de las Indias,” *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*, 983–84 [1001–1002], c. 1615, ink on paper.
<http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/1001/en/text/?open=&imagesize=XL>.

Fantastical Inka imaginings of Antisuyu are recorded in Guaman Poma's drawing entitled “Mapamundi del Reino de las Indias” (World Map of the Kingdom of the Indies) (Figure 1.4; also, Figure ii). At first glance, the map offers an overall

characterization of Tawantinsuyu in a Europeanized format that spans two pages. On closer inspection, we find that Guaman Poma has altered conventional European mapping practices in order to organize space according to Andean dictates. For instance, Cusco, the Inkas' capital, is placed at the exact center of the map, with each of the empire's quarters (or suyus) marked by straight lines that radiate outward from it. As noted in the Introduction, Guaman Poma presents Antisuyu in the east, Quyasuyu in the south, Condesuyu in the west, and Chinchaysuyu in the north. Pictorially, he reinforces the Inkas' spatial hierarchies of hanan and hurin. Antisuyu and Chinchaysuyu are located in the upper and on the proper right side of the drawing, which is consistent with the Indigenous notions of hanan. Quyasuyu and Condesuyu are found in lower and on the proper left side of the map, which marks them both as hurin.

Although Antisuyu is co-located with Chinchaysuyu—the largest and most prestigious of the empire's quarters—in hanan, it is presented as the latter's opposite. Guaman Poma pictorially characterizes Antisuyu as the smallest quarter (although, in fact, Condesuyu was smaller); it is also somewhat of a misfit in terms of Tawantinsuyu overall. In contrast with the other three suyus, where we find settlements comprising buildings, there are none in Antisuyu. While the three others feature male and female pairs dressed in the distinctive regalia associated with their homelands, the Anti pair are naked. Antisuyu itself is alive with animals, both real and imaginary: a dragon, a jaguar, a unicorn, and a lion. Antisuyu's forest mayhem tramples the lines that define the borders of the suyus and its 'wild' contents—both animals and trees—encroach

on, and even spill over, the eastern borders of Chinchaysuyu and Quyasuyu. Guaman Poma's depiction of Antisuyu and its disorder contrasts starkly with the ways the artist depicts the other suyus.

Guaman Poma's Antisuyu is consistent with Inka imperial rhetoric in which the Inkas were the epitome of civilization who introduced order into all areas of their expanding empire. The opposite of their "civilization" was chaos, which they located in Antisuyu. In the Inkas' minds, the Antis were uncivilized, and their lack of civilization was manifested in key aspects of forest culture. Whereas the rest of Tawantinsuyu had permanent architecture, woven cloth, and agriculture, Antisuyu was said to have impermanent dwellings, with people who wore minimal clothing and practiced mostly hunting and gathering; additionally, Anti peoples were said to have confused gender and practiced cannibalism.⁷³

⁷³ Dean, *Culture of Stone*, 71–74. Recent archaeological work in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru have revealed sophisticated cultures in the forest environment who lived in relatively large and permanent or semi-permanent settlements, some dating to very early dates, millennia prior to the rise of the Inkas.

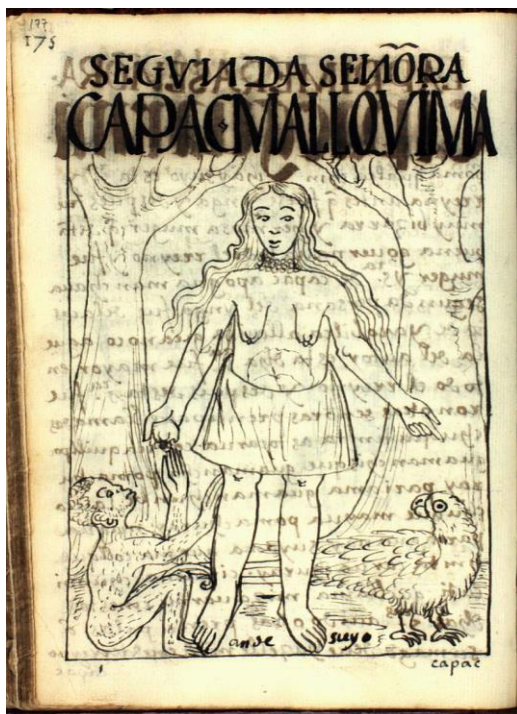


Figure 1.5. Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, “Secunda señora: Mallquima,” *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*, 175 [177], c. 1615, ink on paper.
<http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/177/en/image/?open=idm45693536960800>.

Guaman Poma captures highland Andean sentiments in drawings wherein Antis are characterized as disordered, or wild, just like the forest in which they live. A conflation of person and environment is seen in Guaman Poma’s portrayals of the four *collas* or queens of each *suyu* (Figure 1.5). The Antisuyu colla, Capac Mallquima, is dramatically different from the other *collas*. She is only partially dressed and does not cover her sagging, bare breasts. Her short skirt is a *pampanilla* which is different from the elaborate and high prestige woven textiles worn by the other *collas* from other *suyus*, whom Guaman Poma depicts. Aside from Mallquima, all *collas* cover their bodies. Another variance is that Mallquima’s hair is long and unkempt, compared to the other queens who sport controlled coiffures. Perhaps the starkest difference distinguishing the Anti colla from the queens of the other three

suyus is the forest setting in which she stands. Large trees dominate the background, and she is flanked by a monkey and a bird. Mallquima feeds the monkey, which touches her bare leg, its tail emerging suggestively from between its leg to tickle her ankle. According to the visual information, she maintains a close and perhaps even sexual relationship with forest animals. Guaman Poma's corresponding passage describes Capa Mallquima as a cannibal who wears hardly any clothes.⁷⁴ This drawing and passage convey the idea that Anti peoples and their forest home exemplify disordered nature which either ignores or is unfamiliar with proper behavior.⁷⁵

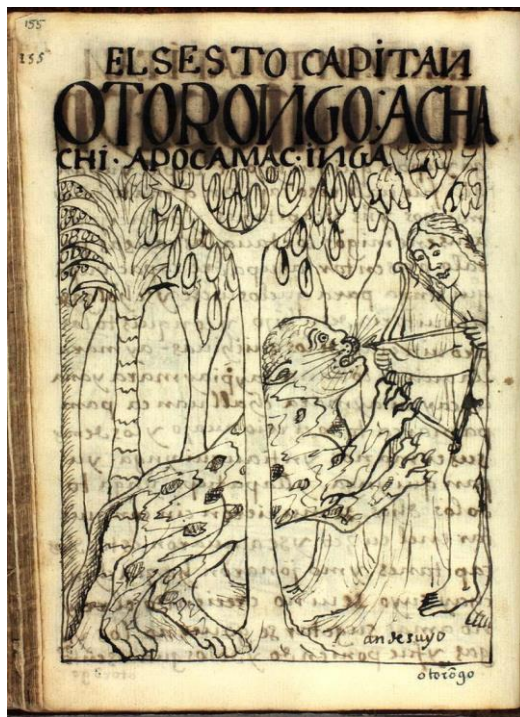


Figure 1.6. Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, “El sexto capitán: Otorongo Achachi Inka, or Camac Inka, apu,” *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*, 155 [155], c. 1615, ink on paper. <http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/155/en/image/?open=idm45693536960800>.

⁷⁴ Guaman Poma, *Primer Nueva Corónica*, 176 [178].

⁷⁵ Bertazoni, *Antisuyu*, 199.

“Magical” aspects, as suggested by the fantastical beasts in the “Mapamundi” also appear on other pages of Guaman Poma’s work. In his depiction of the sixth Inka captain, Otorongo Achachi Apo Camac, we see a jaguar attacking an Anti warrior in a dense palm forest (Figure 1.6). The jaguar, or *otorongo*, spans the page’s center, leaping towards the proper left, where the naked Anti, with his barely retracted bow and arrow, is pushed out of the frame. The *otorongo*’s face with its human characteristics is more than feline. The attacking jaguar is, in fact, Otorongo Achachi Apo Camac, an Inka warrior who, the text tells us, became a part of the forest in order to fight forest-dwelling Anti peoples. According to Guaman Poma, each time Otorongo Achachi Apo Camac entered Antisuyu, he would transform into an *otorongo*. He is seen a second time in another of drawing where he is in the forest and has again taken jaguar form (Figure 1.7). Otorongo Achachi Apo Camac’s transformation into a jaguar reinforces the idea that the forest is a supernatural, dangerous place. It also suggests that once the Inkas entered the forest, if they were to survive, they had to become their antithesis; they had to become Anti. Anti peoples were themselves commonly conflated with jaguars by the Inkas; images of Anti warriors as jaguars will be discussed further in Chapter Two.⁷⁶ For the moment, suffice it to say that Guaman Poma’s depictions of Antisuyu, stem from the prevailing highland belief that everything inside Antisuyu was confused and chaotic, with no clear boundaries distinguishing persons, things, and place.

⁷⁶ Bertazoni, “Representations of Western Amazonian Indians,” 238.



Figure 1.7. Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, “Idolos i uacas de los Antisuyus,” *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*, 268 [270], c. 1615, ink on paper.

<http://www5.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/270/en/text/?open=id2974443>.

Antisuyu, as a dangerous, supernatural place necessitated responsible Inka control.⁷⁷ In Inka rhetoric it figured as a place of peoples and materials in great need of Inka administration. Its forests, full of material resources, would be put to better use by the Inkas. Primary among these resources was chonta. We turn now to consider ways the Inkas attempted to tame chonta, to not only take palm wood out of the disorderly forest, but to take forest chaos out of the wood.

⁷⁷ Guaman Poma brutally represents the Antis in his portrayals of their burial traditions, fiestas/music, and *huacas*, which he shows as chaotic, confused, and misdirected, see Bertazoni, “Antisuyu,” 199-205 and Dean, *Culture of Stone*, 71–72.

1 | 3 TAKING THE KNOTTY OUT

Wood, as a subject-object, can lend itself to the carver or it can refuse to cooperate. Although there are no surviving accounts of obdurate wood similar to the stones that cried blood, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the resistance of wood to being made into drinking cups registers in scars left from the shaping processes and splits that appear in response to miscalculated adze blows or abusive or careless treatment of the finished work. Although this chapter is focused primarily on Inkas' perceptions of the forest and its parts, it is worth noting that the Antis (both human and otherwise) did not see themselves as savage and in need of civilizing. Possible Anti understandings will be pursued in Chapter 3, but for this discussion we recognize that the rough interiors of keros show the process of becoming drinking vessels, visually signaling their transformation from wild trees into useful tumblers. The interiors trace the carving process. For the Inkas, these were scars of a battle that the Antis lost, and so were records of triumph.

Tawantinsuyu was an empire of power but also of persuasion.⁷⁸ Keros as pan-Andean drinking vessels made from wood were symbols of proper relationships and, as such, were integral to Inka statecraft.⁷⁹ The Inkas utilized gift-giving and the millennia-old Andean tradition of reciprocity in a coercive way.⁸⁰ Feasts, hosted by

⁷⁸ Dean, "Rock and an Art Place," 239.

⁷⁹ In addition to keros, which were made of wood, the Inkas utilized vessels made of gold and silver, which were called *aquillas*.

⁸⁰ For more on the coercive aspects of reciprocity within the Andes see: Peter Gose, "Sacrifice and the Commodity Form in the Andes," *Man* 21, no. 2 (June 1986): 296–310.

the Inkas, featured the distribution of copious food, drink, and gifts. While said to demonstrate the generosity of the state, commensal rituals functioned as coded performances of Inka power and dominance over their “guests,” (i.e., local populations). Given the principle of reciprocity, the guests were obliged to give in return, which they did in the form of tribute in labor and kind.

In the context of feasting, keros, always presented in pairs, were used to consume maize beer called *chicha* by Spaniards (*aqha* in Quechua). Early research on keros suggests that their abstract, linear designs likely replicate tokapu motifs on textiles, which take the shape of geometric forms arranged in a grid.⁸¹ Cummins notes, however, that most kero designs have repeated diagonal lines, a characteristic that differs from tokapu patterns. He observes that concentric linear designs emanating from a central form emphasize centrality and unity. He also suggests that these geometric patterns resonate with the Quechua pronouns *noqa* (“I”), *noqanchis* (the inclusive “we”), and *noqayku* (the exclusive “we”) to emphasize social relations of power within the empire.⁸² While Cummins primarily considers human relationships, I want to think about relationships between human persons and keros *who*, as subject-objects, can be thought of as kero persons.

⁸¹ Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, 92.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 92–93.



Figure 1.8. Inka Kero, Late Horizon, wood, dimensions unknown, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (Washington DC), accession no. 15.0180. Image from: Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, Fig. 1.4.

A kero in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City is representative of Autonomous-era Inka wooden tumblers (Figures 1.2 a and b). The kero tapers near its base and extends upward to a fluted rim. It features incised geometric patterns that are vertically oriented with plain bands that alternate with vertical bands of chevron design. In the top register, a thin band comprises a repeated pattern of nested rectangles. Many Autonomous-era keros display designs similar to those on this example, but there are many other geometric motifs as well. In general, kero decoration is characterized by repetitive, geometric, and abstract configurations, rendered in the *chonta* by fine incising (Figure 1.8).

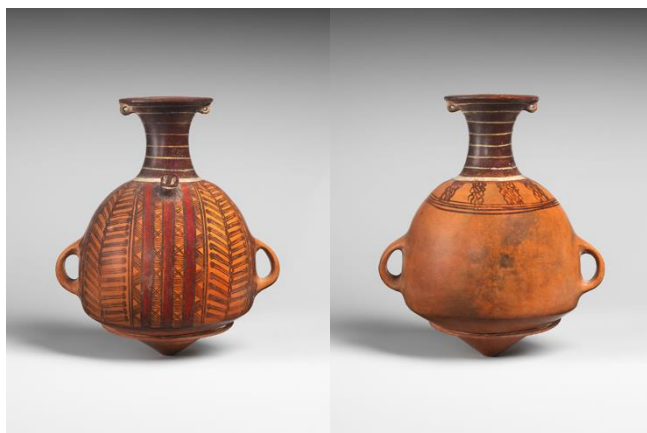


Figure 1.9. Inka Cusco-style aryballo (left: patterned side; right: unpatterned side), Late Horizon, ceramic, H. 21.9 x W. 18.73 x Diam. 14.6 cm., Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 1978.412.68, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/310520>.

To deepen an understanding of kero decoration, we can learn from other examples of Inka visual culture pertaining to feasting. Cummins, for example, compares kero decoration with that of aryballos, which are Inka serving vessels with conical bases, two handles, and long, narrow necks with flaring lips (Figure 1.0). He concludes that the designs on aryballos and keros were meant to correlate with one another because of their shared purpose in feasts.⁸³ The archaeologist Tamara L. Bray, in a study of aryballos and the material semiotics of Inka iconography, argues that potters dressed the aryballos in textiles to identify them as persons.⁸⁴ She observes that, in the Andes, “the essence of personhood was visually and materially manifest through the donning of clothing.”⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., 37.

⁸⁴ Bray, “Partnering with Pots: The Work of Objects in the Imperial Inca Project. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 28, no. 2 (2018): 247.

⁸⁵ Ibid.



Figure 1.10. Inka kero, Late Horizon, wood, H. 11.74 × Diam. 10.16 cm.,
Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 1994.35.10,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/316838>.

In some vessels, the garment-like nature of the incised motifs is explicit. For example, the kero illustrated in Figure 1.10 features a “head-and-arms” motif repeated at the top of its exterior (Figure 1.10).⁸⁶ Below the anthropomorphic head-and-arms, the vessel’s body is covered in a nested square design with a central diamond-motif running vertically down the body forming “torso” and “hips.” Both squares and diamonds are frequently-seen textile motifs, transforming the kero into an anthropomorphic body. The head-and-arms motif is repeated on a number of keros where the vessel body is garbed in abstract, textile-like configurations (Figures 1.11–13). Considering the Andean tradition of dressing numerous kinds of subject-objects

⁸⁶ The kero imagery seen in Figure 1.10 is not unique; see, for example, Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, 94.

from rocks to structures, figural statues, and more, in real textiles or with textile-like designs, keros garbed in incised geometric motifs surely registered as Inka subjects who participated in the state's system of reciprocity through which the Inkas managed their empire. Importantly the geometric designs, which identified the kero-persons as civilized beings, did not affect the kamay of the material; the essence of the chonta was still present and so keros retained their Anti essence. To the Inkas, they were Antis tamed, made sociable and civilized.



Figure 1.11. Inka kero, Late Horizon, wood, H. 6 cm., the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 1994.35.9, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/316837>.



Figure 1.12. Inka kero, Late Horizon, wood, H. 5.39 cm., the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 1994.35.8, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/316836>.



Figure 1.13. Inka kero, Late Horizon, wood, H. 14.6 cm., the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 1994.35.11, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/316839>.

Dean, although focused on Inka stonework, also writes about aryballo, discussing the connection between their decoration and cosmic organization. She observes that aryballo are often decorated on only one side while the other side is left

plain (Figure 1.9).⁸⁷ Dean describes the patterned side as focused on relational qualities such as convergence, connection, and opposition, all of which are important to Inka imperial organization. She explains, “putting these motifs together, the elaboration of one side of the vessel evokes times/places (*pacha*) of meeting, of possible disputation, but also of coming together in a resolution of conflict or in an affirmation of bonds between dissimilar groups.”⁸⁸ The patterned side complements the plain side, emphasizing the contrast between orderly places, which are put to good use, and unused or vacant spaces which are full of unrealized potential. Given the political contexts of feasts featuring aryballoi, decoration that underscores the connection between prosperity and imperial expansion into ‘unused’ areas, was surely powerful. I would like to extend this discussion to kero decoration.

The emphasis on relational qualities through patterned and unpatterned, or plain, space is sometimes featured in kero decoration; such is the case in Figure 1.2 where decorated and plain vertical bands alternate. In every kero, however, regardless of the extent to which the exterior is blanketed with incising, the interior is invariably plain. I see this contrast between decorated exterior and seemingly plain interior as highly relevant. When in use, the vessel, understood as a body, would be brought to

⁸⁷ Dean, “A Celebrated Stone: The Inkas’ Carved Monolith at Saywiti,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 73–74, (Spring-Autumn 2020): 308–24. Aryballos is a Greek term for a conical scent bottle and, as Dean notes, is technically the incorrect term for these vessels; however, since the term’s introduction by Hiram Bingham in 1915, it has been widely used. See: George R. Miller, “An Investigation of Cuzco-Inca Ceramics; Canons of Form, Proportion, and Size,” *Ñawpa Pacha* 25–27 (1987–1989): 127.

⁸⁸ Dean, “Celebrated Stone,” 320.

the consumer's lips and, once nose deep, the imbiber would likely have noticed the interior adze markings where the once solid heart of wood had been hollowed out to form a beaker. While drinking, the hand holding the vessel would have felt the fine incised lines carved on its exterior. The contrast between roughly hewn interior and carefully controlled lines on the exterior are felt as well as seen.

While the exterior designs merit attention and have been the focus of other kero studies, Andean phenomenology insists that the interiors ought not be ignored. Lau argues, with regard to Autonomous Andean cultures more broadly, that visual and material representations of the Other are the best sources for understanding how the identity of Self and Other were constructed.⁸⁹ Lau contends that it is not just the imagistic representations or decorations that should be studied, but also the formal elements of that object such as its physical materials, shapes, and colors.⁹⁰ In the case of keros, the rough interiors index the process of transforming the disorderly Antis into something useful to, something that advanced the imperial objectives of, the Inkas.

⁸⁹ Lau, *Ancient Alterity in the Andes*, 17.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.



Figure 1.14. Inka wall of nibbled, high-status polygonal masonry, Compound of Inka Roqa (Archbishop's Palace), Cusco, Peru. Image from: Dean, *Culture of Stone*, 116.

Throughout Inka visual culture, an emphasis on the process of transforming things, of bringing them to order, was just as important as the finished product. For example, Dean discusses the ways in which the process of shaping stone used in high-status structures remains visible on the lithic surface; marks of the hammerstone index the process through which stone was transformed (Figure 1.14).⁹¹ The Inka term for his process translates as “nibbling.” As Dean argues, the nibbled stones, which fit tightly together without mortar to form strong and enduring walls, correlated with other imperial subjects (human or otherwise), each of whom was brought to order by the Inkas and who functioned as cooperative parts of a prosperous whole.⁹² She also notes that the nibbles could be read as domesticating the rock,

⁹¹ Dean, *Culture of Stone*, 76.

⁹² *Ibid.*

bringing it out of the chaos in which it was found and transforming it into something functional and useful to the state and to other state subjects. The appearance and shape—the evidence of process—draws attention to the transformation, the “bringing to order” through which something useful is created from disorder.



Figure 1.15 Inka kero, Late Horizon, chonta wood, H. 20.32 x Diam.14.12 cm., Fred Olsen Collection, Krannert Museum, University of Illinois, Urbana, object no. 1967-29-407. Photo by author.

Like stone exteriors, the irregular interiors of wooden keros show the process of becoming useful to the Inkas. The rough interiors index the difficult process of carving the unyielding chonta, and so identified the carver as someone who dominated the tenacious wood. That the carver became more stubborn than the wood itself, reminds us of Otorongo Achachi Apo Camac, the Inka warrior who became the alpha predator of the forest in order to defeat his forest foes. In addition to signaling Inka triumph, the interior marks also trace the experience of the (sentient) wood. As was the case with hammerstone marks on lithic blocks, the tracks of the adze in

chonta highlight the process of ordering imposed by the Inkas and apparently accepted by the wood itself (Figure 1.15). Sometimes the traces of tools seem haphazard; in other examples, the carving seems rhythmic and precise. Still, in others, the carving appears smooth as though it were polished after carving, a process that left just a few marks and prominent wood grain (Figures 1.16–1.19). The markings inside each kero communicate wood's encounter with the Inkas' ordering activities. The roughness of each kero is unique, just as each block of stone nibbled by Inka masons was distinctive, and just as the "nibbles" indicate the degree of petrous collaboration, each keros' adze markings indicate the degree the chonta cooperated with the Inkas. In the end, the chaotic, the 'naughty,' was purged to transform chonta into a vessel that could be used during feasts to confirm and celebrate hierarchical relationships between the state and its subjects.



Figure 1.16 Inka kero, Late Horizon, wood, H. 11.74 x Diam. 10.16 cm., The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 2004.212, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/319487>.



Figure 1.17. Inka kero, Late Horizon, wood, H. 6 cm., the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 1994.35.9, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/316837>.



Figure 1.18. Inka kero, detail of rim, Late Horizon, wood, H. 8.57 cm., the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 1994.36.10, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/316838>.



Figure 1.19. Inka kero, Late Horizon, wood, H. 5.39 cm., the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), accession no. 1994.35.8, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/316836>.

The interior scarring of keros record Inka dominance. But they also indicate that the wood, to some degree, recognized the benefits of being Inka subjects. From an Inkas' perspective, keros served as apt metaphors for imperial subjects; they accentuated the Inkas' process of ordering to produce civilization. The marks were left precisely to draw attention to the process of ordering and to contrast deliberately with the finely and carefully incised exteriors.

In Dean's writing on Inka stone, kamay is described as "transubstantial" and "independent of form." Noting this, we can surmise that the kamay of the chonta could be shaped from something disorderly into an integral and powerful tool for Inka dominance within the spectacle of feasts.⁹³ All Andeans were no doubt aware of the distant and forested origins of chonta, which had been imported by both highlanders and coastal peoples for millennia where its most common use was as weaponry. Chonta as a material was linked to warfare and militancy, characteristics that applied to forested zones more generally, as discussed above. Given the pan-Andean notion of kamay, that chonta remained in its material being, Anti. Once hollowed out and garbed in Inka clothes it became a state actor delivering state-produced chicha to local populations. Thus, the kero was both Anti and Inka ally, its tenacity now in service to the Inkas and so adding to Inka dominance. The dramatic alteration of chonta into vessel, with marks from its making, signified the Inkas' dominance over something widely deemed as uncontrollable, but which, under the Inka rule, had become subservient, manageable, and sociable.

⁹³ Dean, *Culture of Stone*, 5.

1 | 4 CONCLUSION

Antisuyu was, in the last century of the Autonomous era, contested territory, full of desirable goods and “magic,” but also danger. The Inkas characterized the Antis as their chaotic complements, as the irascible opponents to Inka order whose subservience—when achieved—served to enhance Inka power. Numerous Inka lives were lost in failed efforts to annex Anti lands, but so great was the Inkas’ desire for Antisuyu’s resources, that the Inkas were still aggressing at the time of the Spanish invasion. Exotic forest goods were material and visual metonyms for all Anti things, including Anti people. As discussed in this chapter, keros made from chonta, hollowed out, shaped into drinking vessels, and wearing textile gifts from the Inka, exhibited the results of Inka ordering activities, which sought to “civilize” the whole of their expanding domain.

Keros served as material surrogates for Anti peoples and were associated with Antisuyu as a whole. From an Inka perspective, converting raw, rough chonta into a beaker was to give it a meaningful form and decorous appearance; it was, in short, to civilize it. Moreover, as drinking vessels, keros played key roles in rituals that demonstrated Inka munificence and the benefits of belonging to Tawantinsuyu. The carving of chonta wood speaks to the process of becoming part of the Inka empire. The marks of carving evince its willingness to be subjugated (or not) and appear as scars on the interior of the keros where the “knotty” was removed in the actuation of Inka order. The finished keros speaks to Inkas’ perceptions of the Anti world, something wild that not only needed to be controlled, but would profit from being

civilized. Nevertheless, the materiality—the *sunqu* (heart and guts)—of the kero remained. In Chapter Three, we will consider Anti views, seeing the keros' markings and materiality as signs that the interior of the forest endured beyond Inka rule. From an Anti perspective, the transformation from raw wood to carved vessel was not so much a capitulation to Inka dominance, but rather was a means of creating social bonds.



Figure 2.1. Inka kero in the shape of an Anti Head with Inka-Anti Battle Scene, Spanish colonial (1550–1800 C.E.), wood and mopa mopa, H. 19 x W. 21.2 x Diam. 16.3 cm., National Museum of the American Indian, cat. no. 10/5859, https://americanindian.si.edu/collections-search/objects/NMAI_114417?destination=edan_searchtab%3Fpage%3D10%26edan_q%3Dkero.

CHAPTER 2 | POLISHED EXTERIORS:

INKA-ANTI RELATIONS IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

2 | 1 INTRODUCTION

The expansion of Tawantinsuyu came to an end when Spanish conquistadors, under the command of Francisco Pizarro, arrived in the Andes. Spaniards found the Inka empire torn asunder by a civil war, which had broken out as a result of the death of the emperor before he had designated his heir. It is likely that the ruler's premature demise was itself caused by the presence of Europeans in the Americas who carried viruses to which Indigenous peoples had no resistance. The victor in the Inka civil

war, Atawalpa, had emerged triumphant shortly before the Spanish arrival. Pizarro and his band marched deep into Peru where they met the new Inka ruler and his army near Cajamarca, in central Peru. Titu Cusi Yupanqui (1529–1571 C.E.), Atawalpa's nephew, provides a second-hand account of the first meeting of Inka and Spaniard. He records that his uncle offered Pizarro's emissaries chicha in an *aquilla* (a golden beaker), which one of them immediately poured onto the ground. The Spaniards then offered Atawalpa a sacred Christian text, which the Inka ruler, still being offended by the refusal of his gift, threw to the ground stating, "What is this supposed to be that you gave to me here? Be gone!"⁹⁴ With that angry exchange, the first meeting ended, each side having rejected the gift of the other.

Interestingly, Titu Cusi's account, which surely reflects a broader Inka perspective, links Atawalpa's rebuff of the Christian text directly to the Spanish rejection of the proffered beverage. In contrast, Spanish accounts by eye-witnesses indicate that the two "rejections" occurred on separate days and in different locations. The emissaries, who refused the drink, had journeyed to where Atawalpa was staying, and on a subsequent day Atawalpa went to meet Pizarro at the Spanish camp where a Dominican friar offered him a sacred text, which the Inka ruler discarded.⁹⁵ Following the insulting treatment of the holy text (either a breviary or the bible itself),

⁹⁴ Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *An Inca Account of the Conquest of Peru* (1570), trans. Ralph Bauer (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 60–61.

⁹⁵ For an eye-witness account of the first encounter see: Juan Ruiz de Arce, "Relación de los Servicios de don Juan Ruiz de Arce, Conquistador del Perú" (1545), ed. Antonio del Solar y Taboada and José de Rújula y de Ochotorena, *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 102, no. 1 (January–March 1933): 327–84.

the Dominican signaled Francisco Pizarro to attack the Inka ruler and his attendants.⁹⁶ After holding Atawalpa for ransom, the Spanish executed him. The Spaniards then marched to Cusco and colonial rule ensued, lasting from 1532 until 1825.

From the Inka perspective, as relayed by Titu Cusi, the offering of drink to Pizarro intended to initiate a reciprocal relationship, which was the hallmark of civilized society in the Andes. By refusing the Inkas' hospitality, the Spaniards rebuffed Inka munificence and violated social decorum. Because of their centrality in commensal ritual, formalizing relationships between individuals and groups, drinking vessels—whether aquilla or the less prized kero—embodied Inka civilization and instantiated social bonds. In the Inkas' narrative of the event, Atawalpa's rejection of the Christian text was a direct result of Spanish impudence. Titu Cusi's conflation of the two "rejections" argues that Atawalpa's lack of respect for a Christian text was commensurate with, and prompted by, prior Spanish (mis)behavior.

With Spanish colonization, foreign social hierarchies were introduced to the Andes, toppling the Inkas from their preeminent post. Binaries of good and evil instead of complementary dualism forced a restructuring of social relationships between human and nature, man and woman, secular and religious, and more. As the

⁹⁶ For more on Pizarro's meeting with Atawalpa, see Gonzalo Lamana, "Beyond Exotization and Likeness: Alterity and the Production of Sense in a Colonial Encounter," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 1 (January 2005): 4–39; MacCormack, "Atahualpa and the Book," in "Colonial Discourse," ed. Rolena Adorno and Walter D. Mignolo, special issue, *Dispositio: Revista Americana de Estudios Semioticos y Culturales* 14, no. 36/38 (1989): 141–68; and Patricia Seed, "'Failing to Marvel': Atahualpa's Encounter with the Word," *Latin American Research Review* 26, no. 1 (1991): 7–32.

cultural anthropologist Irene Silverblatt states, this change sought to bind the colonized to the colonizer.⁹⁷

Descendants of royal Inka bloodlines were recognized by Spaniards as *hidalgos* and benefited from certain economic privileges.⁹⁸ Moreover, *kurakas*, or Indigenous people with authority, who acted as intermediaries between Spaniards and commoners, held land rights while collecting local tribute for the colonial state. At the same time, “lesser lords” took advantage of these social shifts and assumed new titles and privileges.⁹⁹ The once highly controlled and ordered Inka society became more open and inclusive to those who enjoyed some degree of prosperity. Not everyone experienced economic gain or socio-economic mobility, of course; commoners had to work harder under Spanish demands while also living in poverty under the tyranny of *kurakas* who exploited their labor.¹⁰⁰ Given these new colonial hierarchies, Inka nobility had to contend with new ways to maintain their position “at the top of the subaltern pecking order.”¹⁰¹

While European feudal order organized colonial land, labor, and prestige in the viceroyalty of Peru, the Inkas found ways to adapt and thrive.¹⁰² Silverblatt

⁹⁷ Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 110.

⁹⁸ Peoples of non-royal ayllus were considered commoners, or *Indios del común*, and had little status in colonial society; see *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹⁹ Susan Elisabeth Ramírez, *The World Upside Down: Cross-Cultural Contact and Conflict in Sixteenth-Century Peru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 29.

¹⁰⁰ For a detailed discussion of Inka social hierarchy, see *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 99.

¹⁰² Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches*, 109–110.

reminds us in her research on a new noble Inka status that colonization was not a new occurrence in the Andes. The Andes had experienced centuries of dominance and subordination both within and between ethnic groups, with the Inkas being just one force in those histories. Lau understands that, throughout Andean history, alterity was a survival strategy deployed by various Andean cultures during disordered times.¹⁰³ With the dissolution of Autonomous Inka hierarchies under Spanish rule, the Inkas had to imagine new ways of presenting themselves to colonial authorities. One way devised by colonial Inka elites was to identify a subaltern that Spanish administrators would readily recognize, one that proved to be an obstacle to Spanish rule just as it had to the Inka state. The Antis, who were never fully conquered by the Inkas and who played an established role in the Inkas' imaginary, were readily incorporated into colonial Inka culture where they became the irascible Other of both Inkas and Spaniards.

Even as the Inka state was dismantled and Spanish settler colonization commenced, drinking vessels continued to embody civilized relationships and sociability. Every Indigenous household in colonial Peru owned drinking vessels just as they had prior to the Spanish invasion (Fig. 2.1). The vessels did not remain untouched by the dramatic changes that came to the Andes, however. This chapter considers the ways drinking vessels, used by the Inkas under colonial rule, responded to the new world, which native chronicler Guaman Poma aptly described as the

¹⁰³ Lau, *Ancient Alterity in the Andes*, 16.

“world upside down” (*mundo al rreues*).¹⁰⁴ I expand current understandings regarding the choice of both forest materials and Anti imagery in colonial-period keros. Once we grasp the significance of the medium—plant resin applied to wood—I will then consider how forest imagery combined with the kero’s materiality to reimagine the forest as a home for the past, present, and future Inkas. Then I will examine how the Inkas “othered” the Antis—which is to say, characterized the Antis as sub-subalterns—in order to elevate their own status in a new colonial hierarchy. This discussion enriches our understandings of the ways colonial-period keros, in material, design, and use, spoke to the Inkas’ diminished sociopolitical circumstances and the ways they deployed forest resources, including imagery, to secure their survival under settler colonialization and even countervail and undermine Spanish authority.

2 | 2 THE MATERIAL OF RESISTANCE: MOPA MOPA

Prior to the arrival of Spaniards, a hierarchy of drinking vessels prevailed; aquillas were reserved for the most elite, keros were used by lower leaders and administrators, and pottery vessels, likely called *sañu*, meaning fired clay,¹⁰⁵ corresponded to common folk.¹⁰⁶ As far as drinking vessels are concerned, the most impactful result of colonization on Inka elites was the lack of precious metals. Spaniards monopolized gold and silver, scooping it up and melting down crafted items—including aquillas—with stunning alacrity. Faced with a dearth of precious

¹⁰⁴ Guaman Poma, *Primer Nueva Corónica*, 220 [222], 409 [411], 448 [450], 530 [544], 604 [618], 762 [776], 1126 [1136], 1128 [1138].

¹⁰⁵ González Holguín, *Vocabulario de la Lengua General*, 214.

¹⁰⁶ There were also gourd vessels called *mate*; see Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, 30.

metals, Inka elites did not abandon the traditional uses of drinking vessels. Rather, they shifted to wood. Consequently, keros served many of the same functions for Indigenous colonial elites as aquillas had prior to conquest and, as a result, wooden vessels rose in popularity and value.¹⁰⁷ While thousands of keros were produced in the traditional style of the Autonomous era, a new colonial style featuring figural imagery and gleaming with inlaid polychromed colors emerged. Pigments were applied in incised lines and shallowly carved areas with a natural binder known as *mopa mopa*, a resin harvested from the leaf buds of the *Elaeagia* tree that grows in the tropical forests of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Colombia. In contrast to Autonomous-era kero designs that are mostly geometric and abstract, colonial keros became more elaborate, featuring bright colors and pictorial narratives that emphasized Inka histories and traditions.

A forest resin known as *mopa mopa*, or *barniz de Pasto*, was mixed with colorants and carefully inlaid into the wood beaker to depict figural imagery and narrative scenes. The Inkas' unique relationship with the forest, along with inspiration from foreign aesthetics, formed the basis of the Inka's new kero style. Because the Inkas could have easily decorated keros with paint or used slip on clay vessels, I seek to understand why the Inkas preferred the arduous method of inlaying *mopa mopa* in wood. I suggest that *mopa mopa*, a forest material like the wood to which it was

¹⁰⁷ Megan Kirsop, "Vessel of Life: A Case Study of a Colonial Andean *Kero*," (MA thesis, University of Florida, 2013), 45.

applied, vivified the wood, imbuing it with the forest's supernatural powers to help transform porous wood into an impervious beaker.

While there are many studies of colonial kero imagery (to be discussed below), the materiality of mopa mopa has not been extensively thought through. The scientific analyses of mopa mopa on colonial keros carried out by Richard Newman et al. has yielded precise botanical identifications that elucidate important aspects of inter-Andean trade and artistic endeavors with mopa mopa. Research reveals how the Inkas' use of mopa mopa was concomitant with its rise in popularity in Pasto, Colombia, but that the two regions employed different genera of *Elaeagia*, the forest plant from which mopa mopa is made.¹⁰⁸

In its raw form, mopa mopa is a resin exudate derived from small buds, that when collected, can be amassed in a dense, green-tinted, waxy ball. It is harvested and used today by artisans whose techniques are similar to those of the colonial period. First, artisans boil the accumulated resin, and then through a process of kneading, pounding, and continually removing plant particulates, they transform the mopa mopa into a purified malleable state. Powdered forms of various minerals, plants and animals, such as copper salts, lead, cinnabar, indigo, and cochineal are then massaged into the mopa mopa to generate a broad palette of brilliant yellows, blues, greens, reds, and whites.¹⁰⁹ Next, the colored mopa mopa is stretched into thin, large

¹⁰⁸ Richard Newman et al., "Mopa Mopa: Scientific Analysis and History of an Unusual South American Resin used by the Inka and Artisans in Pasto, Colombia," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 54, no. 3 (August 2015): 123–48.

¹⁰⁹ A dark, gummy or sometimes glossy material that consists of fatty acids sometimes borders the mopa mopa designs. Heather Marie White notes that although

sheets from which designs are cut. Mopa mopa designs are then applied carefully in the incised areas on the wooden vessel.¹¹⁰

To the untrained eye, kero figures, delineated in particolored mopa mopa, seem as though they are painted on to the wooden surface. The painted “look” not only emulates Spanish art traditions, but is also visually akin to the traditional Chinese decoration of porcelain, or *la china*, which was popular in the Andes in the middle and late colonial period. The likeness of colonial mopa mopa to porcelain did not escape Spanish audiences; Friar Juan de Serra Santa Gertrudis Serra, for example, remarks on their similarity:

I also saw in the priest’s house a cupboard that held a silver plate and also what seemed to me to be the finest chinaware. And admiring that there were in that place such precious plates, I said to him: “Father, the chinaware you have is more valuable than the silver, the transport of a thing so fragile must have been very costly.” He began to laugh and then told me: “You are not the first to be deceived, my dear Father. That is not porcelain from China, it is wood and it is varnished with a varnish that gives it this luster.”¹¹¹

this dark substance has been described as mopa mopa, it is now understood to be caused by organic residues due to the use of the vessels in feasting. Most keros still in use are caked with said residues and it should be understood that most of the pristine keros found in museum collections have been cleaned despite the Indigenous contention that keros are not meant to be washed; see White, “An Analysis of Unidentified Dark Materials between Inlaid Motifs on Andean Wooden *Qeros*,” (MA thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2016), 77.

¹¹⁰ Several different types of resin “binders” have been used by various Andean cultures, including that of Paracas (800 BCE–100 CE); see, Newman, et al., “Mopa Mopa,” 125.

¹¹¹ Santa Gertrudis, *Maravillas de la Naturaleza* (c. 1775), vol. 1, pt. 1 (Bogotá: Empresa Nacional de Publicaciones, 1956), 139–40 writes, “Vi también en casa del cura un aparador que tenía como vajilla de plata, y entre ella tenía también mucha loza que me pareció china muy primorosa. Y admirando que en tal paraje estuviesen alhajas tan preciosas, díjeles: Padre cura, más valdrá aquella loza de china en este paraje, que aquella de plata; porque a más de ser por sí muy preciosa, la conducción de una cosa tan frágil ha de ser muy costosa. El se echó a reír, y después me dijo: ‘No

Chinese porcelain traveled the international crossroads of a trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic trade route between Asia, Spain, and the Americas. It was popular among Spanish royalty, elites, and the mercantile class. Chinese porcelain served as utilitarian luxury item that and functioned as a domestic display of social status.¹¹² Likewise, Japanese lacquered items were also objects of value that became quite fashionable. Japanese lacquer can appear incredibly similar to mopa mopa; scholars who refer to mopa mopa as lacquer, which is not uncommon, do not help clarify matters.¹¹³ The resemblance of mopa mopa to Asian media becomes even more evident in the colloquial colonial term for barniz de Pasto as *barniz chinesco*, not to mention the use of the word “barniz,” meaning varnish, in the first place.¹¹⁴

Indigenous artists in mopa mopa workshops around San Juan de Pasto, Colombia, may have been inspired by Chinese and Japanese designs. The influence of Asian wares is evident most clearly in the floral motifs. Ñucchu flowers frequently adorn the bases of keros where they echo the delicate floral borders often seen in the Chinese vases imported to the Andes (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). The use of vines to

es el primero que se ha engañado Vuesta Paternidad. Aquella no es loza de china, es de madera y está enbarnizada con un barniz que le da este lustre.”

¹¹² Teresa Canepa, “The Spanish Trade in Kraak Porcelain to the New World and its Impact on the Local Ceramic Industry,” *Revista de arqueología americana* 32 (2014): 99–102. Jingdezhen porcelain, commonly called Kraak, was the most prized and imported type of porcelain; it is famed for its rich design density and quality. Kraak was made for export to the Americas beginning around 1573.

¹¹³ See John H. Rowe and Jimmy Guadagno, “Forged Tiahuanaco-Style Keros,” *American Antiquity* 20, no. 4, pt. 1 (April 1955): 392–93.

¹¹⁴ Gauvin Alexander Bailey, “Asia in the Arts of Colonial Latin America,” in *The Arts in Latin America 1492–1820*, ed. Joseph J. Rishel and Suzanne L. Stratton (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art: 2006), 65.

connect large blossoms that are presented between well-defined spaces is a feature of both Chinese and Andean botanical border designs; both present a flourishing natural, but well-ordered world.¹¹⁵



Figure 2.2. Ming Dynasty, Kraak vessel with floral elements, seventeenth century, blue and white porcelain, H. 36.5 cm., private collection. Image from: Chinaculture.org.



Figure 2.3. Inka kero with ñucchu flowers (detail), colonial period (1550–1900 C.E.), wood and mopa mopa, H. 18.3 x Diam. 16 cm., National Museum of the American Indian, cat. no. 1056/36, https://americanindian.si.edu/collections-search/objects/NMAI_113968?destination=edan_searchtab%3Fpage%3D7%26edan_q%3Dkero.

¹¹⁵ Other Andean flowers that adorn keros are the kantuta, chinchircuma, amancay, chiwanway, maywa and fuchsia. For an excellent discussion of flowers on keros in relation to tokapu and as mediators between chaos and order, see Eleonora Mulvany, “Motivos de Flores en Keros Coloniales: Imagen y Significado,” *Chungara: Revista de Antropología Chilena* 36, no. 2 (July–December 2004): 407–419.

Another type of ceramic ware that may well have inspired colonial-period kero aesthetics is majolica. The unique look of Spanish majolica and its decorative techniques were themselves influenced by the floral designs found in Chinese porcelain.¹¹⁶ In the sixteenth century, majolica wares came to the Americas from Seville where it grew in popularity, especially in New Spain (Mexico). By the seventeenth century it was being produced in great quantities in Panama.¹¹⁷ Because majolica was an expensive and fragile import, production houses were established in both Lima and Cusco around the mid-eighteenth century, although archaeologist Ross W. Jamieson postulates that workshops in Peru may have been established earlier.¹¹⁸ Andean artisans, aware of the prestige-value of both Asian imports and majolica, integrated aspects of designs and color in kero production. It is not coincidental that the new wooden keros, decorated in mopa mopa, looked and felt significantly different from the monochrome keros of the Autonomous world.

Although the Inkas developed a new aesthetic possibly inspired by Asian and European ceramic decoration, they chose wood to enhance, rather than clay. The worth of clay as a medium did not lend itself to the Inka value system; recall that in Autonomous times wood was more highly valued than clay. That Indigenous elites chose to use kero instead of sañu, indicates that, as valued as majolica and Chinese

¹¹⁶ Karime Castillo and Patricia Fournier, “A Study of the Chinese Influence on Mexican Ceramics,” in *Archaeology of Manila Galleon Seaports and Early Maritime Globalization*, ed. Chunming Wu et al. (Singapore: Springer, 2019).

¹¹⁷ Jamieson, “Majolica in the Early Colonial Andes: The Role of Panamanian Wares,” *Latin American Antiquity* 12, no. 1 (2021): 55

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

porcelain may have been, it was not the ceramic medium that made the former valuable, at least not within ritual feasting contexts. The question remains as to why kero makers chose to use mopa mopa instead of painting the kero. First, mopa mopa alters the surface of the wood. It transforms the dusky, matte materiality of the wood into something durable, impenetrable, and shiny; significantly, the result is more akin to the gold and silver aquillas used by the imperial Inkas and also more like the shiny glazed and colorful surfaces of imported ceramics. Perhaps the most startling example of this material modification can be seen in a wooden tray where designs in mopa mopa entirely cover the surface, transforming the wood to look simultaneously metallic and organic, like glazed ceramics or enameled objects of the time (Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4. Spanish colonial tray (Quito, Ecuador), eighteenth century, wood with mopa mopa, 29 x 44.5 x 4 cm., Museo Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador. Image from: Joseph J. Rishel, ed., with Suzanne L. Stratton, *The Arts in Latin America 1492–1820* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006), 136.

The use of mopa mopa covers the wooden vessel with a hard, lustrous resin that alters the porous surface of wood, making it less vulnerable. With the help of

mopa mopa, the transformed kero became stronger than ever. Unlike the fragile nature of china which breaks easily, especially in earthquakes like the devastating one that terrorized Cusco in 1650, the practicality of keros and the hardness of their wood decreases the likelihood of damage. Inevitably, some keros have cracked through use or age, but wood lends itself to mending instead of shattering. Keros, due to their inherent and enhanced durability, became more valuable with age.¹¹⁹

Not only does the inlayed mopa mopa function to provide the vessel with an armor-like coat, it also invigorates the wood, like the xylem and phloem of a tree, which provide nutrition and vitality. The addition of mopa mopa also doubles the “forest materiality” of the wooden vessel, strengthening it in a conceptual way by using one forest substance to complement another: hard wood and formerly-liquid resin combine to create a new resilient kero for a new Andean reality.¹²⁰

While Inka history, myths, and colonial scenes were all depicted on keros in the colonial period, forest imagery and the Antis appear in abundance. Indeed, pictorial depictions of Antisuyu and its inhabitants greatly outnumber portrayals of other suyus and their peoples. Tropical forest fauna and flora, such as monkeys, jaguars, snakes, and chonta trees, provide the setting for many Inka actions, including battle scenes with Antis, as well as Antis engaged in dance and ritual. In addition to the introduction of pictorial imagery, the form of keros changed. The vessel itself was

¹¹⁹ Cinta Krahe, “Chinese Porcelain and other Orientalia and Exotica in Spain during the Habsburg Dynasty” (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2014), 14.

¹²⁰ See note 58 on research indicating that in the colonial period, highland *escallonia* wood was used for many keros. In these cases, the mopa mopa would have added a layer of forest protection to the less-dense highland material.

sometimes carved to depict Anti or jaguar heads (Figure 2.1).¹²¹ The fact that colonial keros never take the shape of people from Collasuyu, Chinchaysuyu, or Condesuyu suggests that the Antis occupied a unique place in Inka thinking.

A number of scholars have written about Antisuyu imagery on colonial Inka keros.¹²² Recently, Bertazoni has published several articles based on her dissertation research in which she argues that the forest imagery on keros reveals the Inkas' attitudes towards Antisuyu. Her work largely endorses Cummins's conclusion that forest imagery, especially in the context of the Antis battling Inkas, served to preserve Inka history and customs and present a strong Inka mythos to a Spanish audience.

2 | 3 PLANTING ROOTS INSIDE THE WET EARTH

Manko Inka, half-brother of Atawalpa, once a teenage figurehead for Spanish rule, eventually rebelled against colonial authority and retreated into the forest refuge of Vilcabamba in 1537 (Figure 2.5). There, among the trees and clouds, the Inkas maintained an independent Inka state nearly forty years until Viceroy Francisco de Toledo brought the last Inka ruler, Tupac Amaru, back to Cusco for execution in 1572.¹²³

¹²¹ Keros in the shape of Anti and jaguar heads are numerous, but there are also some keros in the shape of alpaca heads, as well as footed Spanish goblets.

¹²² In addition to those discussed below, see: Flores Ochoa et al., *Qeros: Arte Inka en Vasos Ceremoniales* (Lima: Banco de Crédito del Perú, 1998); Rowe, "The Chronology of Inca Wooden Cups," in *Essays in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology*, ed. Samuel K. Lothrop (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 317–41; and Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*.

¹²³ Overtime, Vilcabamba was remembered as "Vilcabamba the Old," and then as Espiritu Pampa (The Plain of Spirits); see, Brian S. Bauer et al., *Vilcabamba and the*



Figure 2.5. Inka fortress, Vilcabamba, Peru. Image from: Ticket Machu Picchu, “Vilcabamba: ‘The Lost City of the Incas,’” <https://www.ticketmachupicchu.com/vilcabamba-lost-city-incas/>.

The Inkas had selected Vilcabamba, an Inka settlement in Antisuyu, to be the location for a new Inka state because of its relative inaccessibility. The Inkas had occupied the region around Vilcabamba for over two decades and had established settlements at Machu Picchu, Choquequirao, Vitvos, and Vilcabamba itself.¹²⁴ Vilcabamba was located at the juncture of the Wayna Pucara and Machu Pucara rivers. This meeting of young (*wayna*), or new, and old (*machu*) marked a place of tinku, or the coming together of complementary opposites, signaling a sacred space. Vilcabamba, which was inside the Amaybamba region of the Andes-Amazonian frontier, also stood at the nexus between the highlands and the eastern piedmont, demarcating another kind of tinku, a meeting of two different ecosystems. More broadly, Vilcabamba’s location inside Antisuyu was a connection to the Inka past. Inka temporal consciousness recognizes the future as hanan (upper) and the past as

Archaeology of Inca Resistance (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2015), 4–5.

¹²⁴ Bauer et al, *Voices from Vilcabamba: Accounts Chronicling the Fall of the Inca Empire* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016), 4.

urin (lower).¹²⁵ From a Cusco perspective, the forest is spatially lower, or urin, to the highlands; Antisuyu, then, was seen to embody the historic Inka past.

In the colonial era, the forest was not only a place of refuge and ancestral history, it was also a place of revolt. After the state founded by Manko Inca fell, later rebellions, such as the Juan Santos Atahualpa rebellion (1742–52), were launched from forested lands. Juan Santos Atahualpa was a mestizo from Cusco who retreated to the Gran Pajonal region in the central montaña to spark a widespread rebellion. All Spanish expeditions sent to end the revolt failed, and eventually, the Spaniards withdrew from the central montaña and halted efforts to colonize the tropical region for over a century.

The Inkas understood that the same environmental barriers that had blocked their expansion into Antisuyu would work against the Spaniards to an even greater degree. Spanish warfare required flat, open spaces for men on horseback to maneuver. From the 1530s to the 1810s most Spanish excursions to crush revolts succeeded on the coast and in the highlands since the terrain offered open spaces in which to battle.¹²⁶ As Inka control over the coast and highlands dissipated, their realm expanded into the low-lying tropics. Rebels found safety in the impenetrable and clouded mountainous lands and tropical lowlands of the forest.

¹²⁵ For more on Inka spatial and temporal relations, see Gose, “The Past is a Lower Moiety: Diarchy, History, and Divine Kingship in the Inka Empire,” *History and Anthropology* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 383–414.

¹²⁶ Adrian J. Pearce, “Case Study in Andes–Amazonia Relations Under Colonial Rule: The Juan Santos Atahualpa Rebellion (1742–52),” in *Rethinking the Andes–Amazonia Divide: A Cross-Disciplinary Exploration*, ed. Adrian J. Pearce et al. (London: UCL Press, 2020), 330.

Colonial keros depicting scenes from Antisuyu rendered in forest materials visualized the Inkas' cosmological connection to the forest. The forest offered a place of protection during colonial-period Inka rebellions in areas such as Vilcabamba, and there were also stories of mythical places like Paititi, where the ancestral Inkas awaited liberation from Spanish rule. Kero imagery, such as the rainbow-feline motif which will be discussed below, suggests that the Inkas deployed their colorful, lustrous, wooden drinking vessels to harness ancestral powers during a time of great strife.

Allen, employing ethnographic work with Inka descendants, argues that forest motifs—jaguars, snakes, and rainbows—on keros enabled the Inkas to “go inside” the forest where legendary Inkas still exist.¹²⁷ The Quechua meaning of inside, or *ukhu*, particularly East into the forest's interior, does not necessarily mean *physically* being inside the forest. Allen explains that while *ukhu* can describe the physical act of going into an interior space, it also emphasizes “perception and states of consciousness.”¹²⁸ The metaphysical act of going inside can be traced back to the Autonomous era when, according to Bertazoni, the Inkas went inside the forest to harness their own ancestral powers.¹²⁹

Guaman Poma's depiction of Otorongo Achachi Inka, who turned into a jaguar once inside Antisuyu (see Chapter One), exemplifies this (Figure 1.6). The transformation of an Inka captain into an “otorongo” (jaguar) and an “achachi”

¹²⁷ Allen, “Inkas Have Gone Inside.”

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*,” 193–94.

¹²⁹ Bertazoni, *Antisuyu: An Investigation of Inca Attitudes*, 141.

(grandfather), is as much about the Inkas harnessing forest powers—the otorongo—as it is about the Inkas turning inside to harness the supernatural powers of their ancestors—the achachi. Guaman Poma’s accompanying text states that the Inka captain, with his father Inka Roca, had to transform into otorongos in order to conquer Antisuyu.¹³⁰ As a magnificent predator, the jaguar was often associated with warriors. By depicting Otogrongo Achachi Inka in his jaguar-state, Guaman Poma indicates that the powers of the forest do not belong exclusively to the Antis, but also link the Inkas to their ancestral Inka roots in the forest making them forest dwellers as well. Allen documents the belief, held by the Indigenous residents of Sonqo with whom she works, that the Inkas exist in the forest. She writes,

The Incas were preceded by the Machukuna, a race of giants who lived in moonlight on Antaqaqa, Sonqo's most sacred hill. God (Diosninchis) destroyed them by creating the Sun, whose heat drove the Machukuna into caves, springs and in some accounts eastward into the jungle. Eventually the Incas met a similar fate, but in their case, it was the written word that drove them away... Other people simply said that the Spanish chased the Incas away into the tropical forest.¹³¹

Garcilaso de la Vega, in his seventeenth-century chronicle entitled *Comentarios Reales*, not only discusses the Vilcabamba refuge, but states that other Inkas sought protection in the forest as well. He recounts how remnants of an Inka

¹³⁰ Guaman Poma writes, “Este dicho capitán *Otorongo* conquistó Ande Suyo, Chuncho, toda la montaña. Fue señor que dizen que para auello de conquistar, se tornó *otorongo*, tigre; se tornaron el dicho su padre y su hijo”; see Guaman Poma, *Primer Nueva Corónica*, 154 [156].

¹³¹ Allen, “Inkas Have Gone Inside,” 191.

army stayed in the fertile forest province of Musus/Mojos/Moxos, where they married Anti women and persuaded them to take on Inka customs.¹³²

Perhaps the most well-known Inka refuge is Paititi, a mythical city built at the tinku of the highlands and forest. A mestizo Jesuit priest, Blas Valera, depicts Paititi in a way that is consistent with the Inkas' concept of *yanantin*, a word that expresses complementarity (Figures 2.6).¹³³ On folio 13 recto of the controversial manuscript *Exsul Immeritus Blas Valera Populo Suo* (1618) is a drawing of Paititi from the east; it shows us Paititi from its forest side (Figure 2.6, left). On folio 13 verso, Paititi is drawn from the west, which is to show its highland side (Figure 2.6, right).¹³⁴ As Cinzia Florio points out, the mountain ranges in the two drawings are so similar that one side must have been traced from the other, and the river flowing across both pages seems to connect, affirming each other's existence through and by means of the paper.¹³⁵

¹³² El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios Reales de los Incas* (1609), ed. José Durand (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, 1959), 367.

¹³³ The *Exsul Immeritus Blas Valera Populo Suo*, in which the images of Paititi are found, came to widespread attention in the 1990s as part of what are now known collectively as the Naples documents. The authenticity of this collection has been questioned. I regard the *Exsul Immeritus* as the legitimate work of Valera, written in 1618, without opining on, or accepting, the legitimacy of all of the Naples documents. For analyses of the Paititi drawings and discussion of their authenticity, see, Cinzia Florio, "Recuperare la Memoria: La Llave Inca come Yanantin," *El Olvido Está Lleno de Memoria (Mario Benedetti)*, Giornate di Chiusura del XXXV Convegno Internazionale di Americanistica (Salerno, May 13–15, 2013) (Salerno/Milano: Oèdipus, 2014), 29–58.

¹³⁴ As indicated in the caption to Figure 2.6, I am using scans from Florio's article (see n. 133) because scans from Laurencich Minelli's reproduction appear to have been inexplicably doctored. See, Laurencich Minelli, *Exsul Immeritus*, Plates X and XI.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

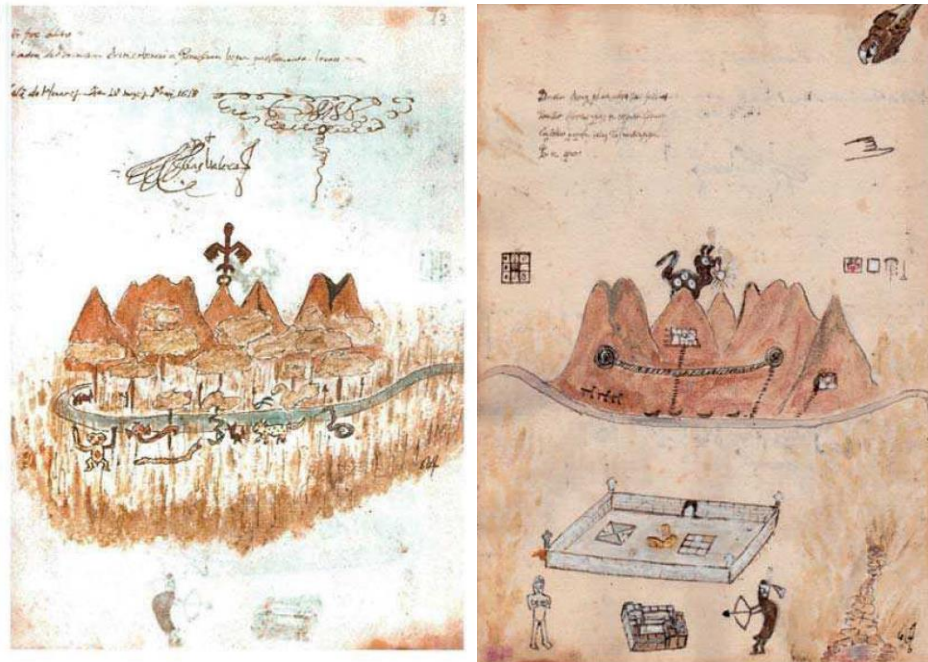


Figure 2.6. Blas Valera, two views of Paititi (Left: from the forest; Right: from the highlands), *Exsul Immeritus Blas Valera Populo Suo*, folios 13r and 13v, 1618, watercolor on paper. Image from: Cinzia Florio, “Recuperare la Memoria: La Llave Inca come Yanantin,” *El Olvido Está Lleno de Memoria* (Mario Benedetti), Giornate di Chiusura del XXXV Convegno Internazionale di Americanistica (Salerno, May 13-15, 2013) (Salerno/Milano: Oèdipus, 2014), 54.

On the folio’s recto, the forest view of Paititi shows a foreground of tall grass and trees inhabited by jaguars, monkeys, and snakes (Figure 2.6 left). The animals gather around a large river that cuts through the dense forest having flowed from presumed origins in the mountain range. A highly stylized condor-like bird perches on the mountain’s ridge, indicating the highlands and the west towards Cusco. At the top of the page is some text, including the Quechua words, “Parachinam veque payllamanta urman” (Tears fall by themselves like rain); below is the place and date of the manuscript (Alcalá de Henares, 10 May 1618). Off to the side we see a scribble

of clouds that swirl down like the rain mentioned in the text, and in the center below the writing and the cloud, is Blas Valera's signature.¹³⁶

The folio's verso depicts Paititi from Cusco's perspective (Figure 2.6 right). A parrot, swooping in from the top right, locates the refuge at the meeting of forest and mountains. On the top of a peak, a large spotted jaguar with the sun in its jaws indicates the east, the direction of its forest homeland and sunrise.¹³⁷ Llamas and unidentifiable objects (possibly birds or small boats) are located near the river which flows at the foot of the mountains. An Inka suspension bridge or perhaps a tunnel connects two mountainous locations. There appears to be a spring in the lower right foreground. Nearby, are two humans, both apparently Antis—one is naked and the other is hunched. The latter is painted in black with a feathered headdress; he has a bow and an arrow drawn for combat. These Antis seem to guard the stone-walled city of Cusco, identifiable by its ashlar architecture. Inside Cusco there are gold nuggets. According to Florio, to the right of nuggets is "checkered" square representing the land of Tawantinsuyu with a colored square highlighting the location of Antisuyu, while to the left of the gold, is a tokapu design designating Cusco and its borders.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ For the text and its transcription into Spanish, see Laurencich Minelli, *Exsul Immeritus*, 156.

¹³⁷ Florio identifies the spotted jaguar as a llama; see, "Recuperare la Memoria," 54.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

A Latin passage appears on the top left of the page, which the Andeanist Laura Laurencich Minelli translates into Spanish.¹³⁹ I translate it from the Spanish into English as follows:

*Dominator, here is the gold you did not steal.
Dominator, here is the liberty that you could not strip away from us.
You, the people of Tawantinsuyu,
You can still trust [that]
I wait for you.*

These sentiments, together with the dual drawings, suggest that Paititi is the complement to Cusco as well as its successor. Now that Spaniards have taken the highlands, the forest will provide an ideal home for the Inkas, offering both security and riches from which to regrow the future Tawantinsuyu.

Paititi also suggest a future in which the forested lands beyond the eastern mountains, once conceived as *urin* to the highland's *hanan*, will be transformed into a future *hanan*. Such an inversion can be understood in terms of the Inkas' "cosmic circulatory system" according to which the powers of *Antisuyu* can be harnessed by "going inside" and so shifting perspective from that of *hanan* looking into *urin* to its opposite (complement): *urin* looking toward *hanan*, or inside looking out.¹⁴⁰ In terms of space and cosmology, the Inka conceived of *Antisuyu* as the place where the sun rises from the cosmic sea into which all rivers flow.¹⁴¹ In the wet season (summer) the

¹³⁹ "*Dominador, aquí está el oro que no robaste. Dominador, aquí está la libertad que no nos arrancaste. Tú, pueblo del Tahuantinsuyu, Puedes todavía confiar Yo lo espero por ti,*"; see, Laurencich Minelli, *Exsul Immeritus*, 156.

¹⁴⁰ Allen, "Inkas Have Gone Inside," 196.

¹⁴¹ Gary Urton, *At the Crossroads of the Earth and the Sky: An Andean Cosmology*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 68.

sun drinks from the cosmic sea and swells, becoming powerful; in the dry season (winter), it shrinks and weakens. The condition of the sun—strong or weak—directly affects water circulation through the cosmos, which is to affect life and death.

From the Inkas' perspective in Cusco, the forest represents the historic past and so is an ancestral place. The highlands, in contrast, are for the living. Just as water flows from the highlands to the lowlands before recirculating in the form of rain or bubbling up in the form of mountain springs, life energy flows from the living to the ancestral and back again. Water and life energy flow, and both go into and emerge from, subterranean pathways. As Allen explains, "to go inside" the forest is to tap into this cosmic circulatory system where the power of the Inkas' ancestors could be engaged.

Like water, chicha was also associated with life energy and so participated in its cosmic flow as well. Drinking from forest wood (a kero) meant to drink from the forest (see Chapter One). Cummins and Mannheim, in their research on the circulation of water in Inka visual culture, conclude that the cosmic flow of kamay (life energy) is expressed in liquids, such as chicha, and in the vessels that hold the chicha, such as keros and human bodies after consumption.¹⁴² When humans drink, their bodies transform into vessels. Moreover, their perspective of themselves

¹⁴² Tom Cummins and Bruce Mannheim, "The River around Us, the Stream within Us: The Traces of the Sun and Inka Kinetics," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 59–60 (Spring-Autumn 2011): 5–21.

necessarily changes. Until their body releases the liquid through urination, they themselves are bodies of water; like the forest, they are reservoirs.

The Inkas' cosmic circulatory system depends not only on dualism, but also this changing of perspectives. When entering the forest, whether physically or conceptually with the ritual aid of a kero, the perspective of what is considered "higher and upper" (hanan) and what is "lower" (hurin) or "inner" (ukhu) shifts. As a consequence, relational hierarchies are always in flux. When the Inkas went "inside" they entered into ancestral spaces and, in a sense, became ancestors themselves. For those who remained in the highlands and so endured Spanish rule, which was the majority of Inkas, the kero represented a way to enter the forest and so commune with their ancestors. Keros, then, can be seen as a means of conceptual rebellion, or at least resistance, an escape—whether of body or of mind—to the forest where ancestors abide in freedom.



Figure 2.7. Colonial Inka keros, Ollantaytambo, Peru, 1537–39 C.E., wood with mopa mopa, dimensions unknown, Museo Inka, Cusco, Peru, accession no. 139. Image from: Emily Kaplan et al., "The Qero Project: Conservation and Science Collaboration Over Time," *Research and Technical Studies Specialty Group Postprints* (American Institute for Conservation) 3 (2012): 11.

The relocation of the Inkas—both physically and conceptually—into the forest’s interior, is manifest in colonial keros. Evocations of the supernatural and ancestral powers of Antisuyu can be seen in the earliest known use of mopa mopa on two keros found at the site of Ollantaytambo (Figure 2.7). These keros each feature two spotted felines, presented in pairs and decorated in orange and black mopa mopa, which allows for us to identify them as jaguars specifically. The jaguars are nested in concentrically carved rectangles that are typical of Autonomous-era design. The Ollantaytambo keros were made during the time of Spanish conquest, dated to 1537–1539, and were found with Autonomous-style keros in a burial context.¹⁴³ They are described by the conservator Emily Kaplan et al. as exhibiting a “transitional” style that combines the Autonomous-style geometric incisions with the use of figural mopa mopa inlay.¹⁴⁴

Cummins discusses the Ollantaytambo keros’ figural depiction of jaguars in connection with Manko II’s brief stay at Ollantaytambo before the rebel leader retreated down river to Vilcabamba. Cummins opines that the pictorial depiction of the jaguar was influenced by Spanish art, a tradition that Cummins believes inspired the “reformulation of traditional Andean objects and images.”¹⁴⁵ Cummins describes the mopa mopa as “painted on” to differentiate the feline from its wooden setting, making a pronounced “visual distinction between the vessel and the image...between

¹⁴³ Emily Kaplan et al., “The Qero Project: Conservation and Science Collaboration Over Time,” *Research and Technical Studies Specialty Group Postprints* (American Institute for Conservation) 3 (2012): 11.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Cummins, *Toasts with the Incas*, 125.

object and figure...”¹⁴⁶ Although Cummins acknowledges that the image is embedded in the wooden vessel, he distinguishes between the geometric incision, which apparently belongs to vessel or background, and the figural image that belongs to the foreground. He sees this as an example of “slippage” between Inka visual culture and that of the Spanish.¹⁴⁷

The word “slippage” suggests a lack of intentionality. I would like to explore the possibility that the juxtaposition of figural image and geometric form was purposeful, and moreover, the that geometric form is not background, but is an integral part of the “image.” Together, figural motif and geometric abstraction, produce a meaning. Firstly, the mopa mopa out of which the jaguars are formed are native to forest as is the wood of which the vessel is made. As discussed in Chapter One, the Inkas consistently conflated Antisuyu with all things in the forest; the Ollantaytambo kero resonates with this line of thinking. In both image and medium, the kero *is* forest.

Secondly, the concentric squares have meaning in and by themselves. The Andean archaeologist, Tamara L. Bray identifies concentric squares as caves and, more specifically the cave of origin from which the Inkas first ancestors emerged¹⁴⁸ One might even be tempted to “read” the jaguar-in-the-squares as an “otorongo

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 126.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Bray, “Partnering with Pots,” 252–253. Bray’s identification of concentric squares as the Inka place of origin (Paqaritampu) is based on Joan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua’s drawings of the legendary caves of Paqaritampu as three sets of concentric squares in his *Relación de antigüedades deste Reyno del Pirú* (1613).

achachi.” Even if the meaning is not so precise, and linked to Inka mythology, the placement of jaguars in caves on the Ollantaytambo kero implicates the forest as an origin place. Indeed, the concentric squares appear to diagram the act of entering an ancestral space, a “going inside.” Additionally, the concentric squares visually protect the jaguar in the same way the forest protected the Vilcabamba Inka. The juxtaposition of the figural jaguar with the Autonomous abstract kero design also renders the new representational style and its medium (*mopa mopa*) more familiar to highland audiences.

The motif of the jaguar as a sign of the forest persisted from the earliest days of the colonial period until its end (and quite possibly beyond). Frequently the jaguar is seen as part of the feline-rainbow motif (Figure 2.8). Cummins finds that this motif represents the *kuraka*’s authority because of its association with many coats of arms used by various members of Indigenous nobility in the colonial period. But, as Allen reminds us, Inka visual culture can both represent authority, and also be the “nature and origins of power.”¹⁴⁹ “It is likely not a coincidence that the feline-rainbow motif became a prominent design at the same time as the proliferation of the Paititi myth and also the instigation of rebellions led by Inka leaders.

¹⁴⁹ Allen, “Inkas Have Gone Inside,” 187.



Figure 2.8. Colonial kero with the feline-rainbow motif, Cusco region, Peru, 1550–1800 C.E., wood with mopa mopa, H. 49 x Diam. 16 cm., National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (Washington D.C.), cat. no. 16/3605, https://americanindian.si.edu/collections-search/objects/NMAI_175485?destination=edan_searchtab%3Fpage%3D10%26edan_q%3Dkero.

Depicted in a kero from the National Museum of the American Indian, an Inka couple—the Sapa Inka and his *coya*—are separated by two prominent jaguar heads, each of which is coupled with the royal fringe, the *maskapaycha* (Figure 2.8). A rainbow extrudes from the jaguar’s mouth to arch over the ruler and queen. Small white dots indicate rain or possibly heavy mist typical of the forested eastern slopes of the Andes mountains. Allen’s research indicates that this Inka couple is hiding inside in the forest, and that the rainbow signifies rain and prosperity.¹⁵⁰ The forested ancestral realm is only accessible through the “doors to Paititi” or the jaguars’ mouths. Recall that in one of Valera’s drawings of Paititi, a jaguar sits at the Andes-Amazonian frontier; with the aid of Allen’s informants we can understand Valera’s jaguar as a conduit to the forest realm (Fig. 2.6, right). Similarly, we might view

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 192; for more on rainbow iconography see Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, 261–267.

keros featuring jaguars as the means to access the forest, which is to access their ancestors and Paititi as well.¹⁵¹ By using keros in ritual, especially those adorned with forest imagery, the Inkas kept the past alive. It also kept the future alive because such was the promise of Paititi. To drink was thus an act of resistance to, if not a kind of rebellion against, the Spanish crown.¹⁵²

To summarize my argument thus far: the forest, within Indigenous Andean discourse, was evoked as a protected, hidden, and resilient space. It was also a spiritual, ancestral place and a source of Indigenous agency. By means of forest imagery, colonial Inkas envisioned a potential future, a future that would see Indigenous autonomy return to the Andes. Seeds that would give rise to that future were planted, protected, and nurtured in Antisuyu.

2 | 4 THE SUB-SUBALTERN

Bertazoni advances the idea that since the Inkas never truly conquered the Antis, their frustration over failed attempts to annex Antisuyu persisted over the centuries, so much so that Inka-Anti tensions became a dominant narrative in colonial kero designs.¹⁵³ That imagery also addressed the colonial context in which keros were used. With Spanish colonization the Inkas, once at the apex of the Andean socio-political hierarchy, were reduced to the status of subaltern; they became an Other alongside all other “indios,” Kero imagery memorializing battles in which the

¹⁵¹ Of interest here, Arnold briefly traces the origins of the word “Paititi” to “pay titi” (dos gatos montés), or “two wildcats”: see Arnold et al., “*Hilos sueltos*,” 95.

¹⁵² Allen, “Inkas Have Gone Inside,” 192.

¹⁵³ Bertazoni, “Representations of Western Amazonian Indians,” 329.

imperial Inkas defeated the uncivilized Antis, countered the homogenization of Indigenous Andean peoples and worked to portray the Antis as a sub-subaltern group. Colonial keros with Anti themes reinforced the historical basis of colonial Inka authority and bolstered Inka prestige as great civilizers, even in the colonial present. With the fall of the empire to Spanish invaders, the Inka doubled down on notions of Anti savagery in order to ally themselves with Spanish administrators who also found the irascible forest dwellers difficult to pacify. Colonial keros featuring Antis emerged as the Inkas grappled with their own “subalternativity” by identifying a *sub-subaltern* who, perversely, linked Inkas to Spaniards as co-civilizers of the Andes.

Inka elites quickly came to understand that Spanish authorities were particularly wary of Indigenous non-Christian practices. While some behaviors, like leaving small offerings at *apachetas* (roadside shrines), were dismissed as idle superstitions, other practices, like rituals featuring the use of keros, were deemed dangerous to colonial control. The prominent use of keros in Andean rituals included excessive drinking that the Spanish viewed as demonic in nature.¹⁵⁴ Spaniards tried to stop the production and circulation of keros through their campaigns to extirpate idolatry, but the significance of keros in Andean society proved too hard to extinguish.¹⁵⁵ The use of keros sealed reciprocal relationships, which were the glue holding Andean society together. From an Indigenous perspective, abandoning keros

¹⁵⁴ Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, 150.

¹⁵⁵ Intensive campaigns to extirpate idolatry began in the 1560s, focusing on Taki Unquy (Taqi Oncoy), an Indigenous movement that included the revival of native religion. The campaigns continued throughout the colonial period, intensifying in the eighteenth century with the rise in the number of Indigenous-led rebellions.

would be to forsake sociality. At this very moment when Spanish authorities threatened Andean peoples, keros took on a different social life—not only were keros social actors on the stage of ritual feasting, but they became actors in subverting Spanish rule. Under colonial rule, keros became a vehicle for Indigenous agency.

Keros continued to embody the forest and its inhabitants, including the Antis, just as they had done in the Autonomous era (see Chapter One). They did so with several purposes: to communicate with the ancestral Inkas; to identify the forest with future Indigenous autonomy and the rebirth of an Inka state; and to elevate Inka status in the minds of colonial authorities by “othering” the Antis in ways that aligned with Spanish perspectives. Because forest places such as Paititi gave power and hope to the Inkas in the colonial world, the Inkas concealed their own ancestral attachments to Antisuyu from the Spaniards. Their efforts can be seen in Inka descriptions of sacred places within the Andean landscape. In the late sixteenth century, chronicler and geographer López de Velasco traveled to Peru to ask Spaniards and Indigenous peoples alike to participate in a fifty-question survey about Peru’s geography for Spanish king Philip II. This questionnaire, the *Relaciones Geográficas* (c. 1582), invigorated Indigenous thinking about their past which was tied to the spatial and temporal qualities of the forest, yet the responses offered by Indigenous informants seem to have been purposely misleading in order to appease a Spanish Christian audience. Sacred places are described as belonging to the Inkas of the past, but as

ones clearly cleaved from current Christian practices.¹⁵⁶ Through deceptive answers, Indigenous respondents made a concerted effort to hide Inka ambitions to power in the past, a historical space and time that Indigenous peoples could still access in their present and in the future.

While the Spaniards saw Indigenous Andeans as subalterns, the Inkas retained some portion of their power as leaders of various kinds of Indigenous constituencies.¹⁵⁷ To bolster their precarious positions between Spanish authorities and their native followers, the colonial Inkas, like Guaman Poma, perpetuated and even hyperbolized forest savagery for Spanish audiences (see Chapter One). These stories highlighted their contentious forest neighbors as the Inka's subaltern, rendering the Antis their sub-subaltern in the colonial social sphere. Violent Spanish encounters with inhabitants of the forest realm seemed only to verify these accounts. The colonial Inkas constructed the Antis an irascible, non-Christian Other which was born out of Autonomous dualism and twisted with European conventions of "good versus evil" for both Inka and Spanish audiences alike.

¹⁵⁶ For more on the *Relaciones Geográficas* see, Heidi V. Scott, *Contested Territory: Mapping Peru in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, History, Languages, and Cultures of the Spanish and Portuguese Worlds (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 59.

¹⁵⁷ Dean writes about the ways Spaniards distinguished between *Indios amigos* (friendly Indians) and *Indios de guerra* (hostile Indians). The former inhabited the coast and highlands; the latter were often peoples of the forested eastern slopes, see: Dean, "Savage Breast/Salvaged Breast: Allegory, Colonization, and Wet-Nursing in Peru, 1532–1825," in *Women and Art in Early Modern Latin America*, ed. Kellen Kee McIntyre and Richard E. Phillips (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 253.

With Spanish colonization, the boundaries between highlands and forest remained contested. After colonizing New Spain and much of Peru, Spaniards continued to expand, venturing into the forest in search of treasures concealed by its thick vegetation. Although they quickly claimed and inhabited many existing Inka sites in the forest (as elsewhere), the canopied east mostly remained a *terra incognita*. The forest inhabitants—Antis—remained fierce and formidable. Moreover, the forest itself proved to be an enemy, full of vicious diseases and both hostile flora and fauna. Metaphorically, the forest was a Christian Hell that believers had to traverse before reaching Paradise.¹⁵⁸ For the Spaniards, the forest represented greater territorial expansion and resource acquisition. More simply put, its promise of wealth made the it worth the challenge.

Once Tawantinsuyu fell, the Inka abandoned most forest sites and the tropical vegetation closed in, concealing the extent of Antisuyu. The Spaniards, who elsewhere inherited the geographical scope of Tawantinsuyu, confronted the same obstacles when it came to “conquering” the forest. Because the Spanish had a hard time controlling forest peoples, the narrative of the Anti as the sub-subaltern lent itself nicely to a new colonial imaginary, which the Inka helped curate. Images of Inka warriors battling the Antis populated kero design and were easily legible to a Spanish audience due to their pictorial format and message that the Antis were an uncivilized Other.

¹⁵⁸ Scott, *Contested Territory*, 142.

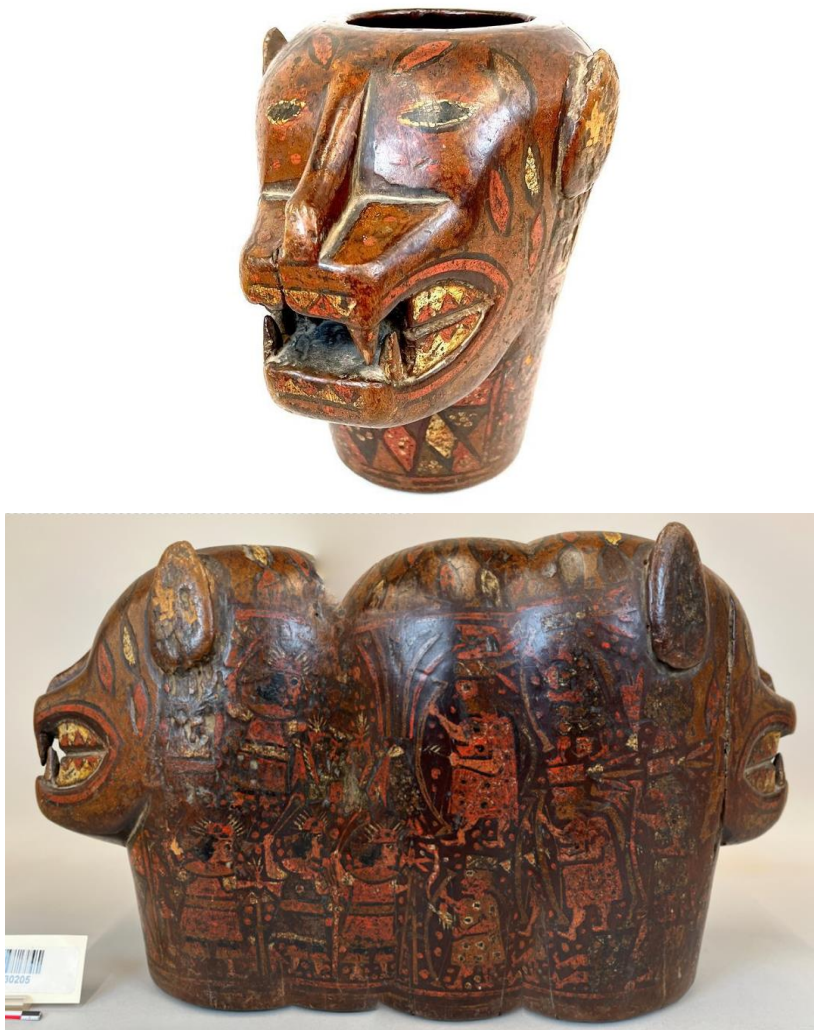


Figure 2.9. Colonial Inka kero in the form of a jaguar head depicting an Inka-Anti battle (upper) and roll-out photograph (lower), late sixteenth century, wood with mopa mopa, H. 25 x Diam. 17 cm., Peabody Museum of Natural History (Yale), cat. no. ANTH.030205. Photo courtesy of Roger Colten; photo stitching in roll out by author.

I turn to a kero in Yale's Peabody Museum collection which is carved in the shape of a jaguar head and is representative of a range of colonial-period feline-head keros (Figure 2.9).¹⁵⁹ The front of the jaguar's head features a ferocious snarling

¹⁵⁹ Keros, similar in subject matter and style, are in the collections of the Museo Regional de Cusco (Peru), <https://icom.museum/en/object/inca-kero-wood-35-x-16->

mouth, revealing sharply pointed and blood-stained teeth. Pelt markings are rendered as red, tan, and cream oblong spots, which descend to the base of the neck where they transform into a neat pattern of red, tan, cream, and blue rhombus shapes decorated with white dots. In using the kero, the drinker's hand would likely grasp the neck of the jaguar. The most convenient means of drinking would result in the feline's face pointing outwards, snarling at the viewer, but "restrained" by the imbiber.

On the back of the jaguar's head is depicted a battle between Inkas and Antis. It is similar to Inka-Anti battle scenes featured on other colonial-period keros. There is no identifiable architecture visible in the scene, an absence that might signal that the fight takes place in the forest, a place that was said to "lack" architecture.¹⁶⁰ The scene is visually partitioned in the middle by a hardwood palm like the one from which the vessel is carved. To the proper left, which is the hurin side of the palm, the Antis are dressed in jaguar pelts, hold bows and arrows, are barefoot, have long hair, and feature faces painted in horizontal bands. An identifiable red snake, or *amaru*, hovers near the central bottom of scene next to an Anti's bow. One Anti is dead, and the others seem randomly placed and clumsily occupy the cramped space. In contrast, the Inka fighters form an orderly force on the palm's proper right, which is hanan side of the vessel. They wear Inka tunics with tokapu designs and are armed with slingshots (*warak'as*), which they are about to deploy. The arrangement of the figures

cm-museo-regional-de-cusco-peru/, and in the Museum of the Americas (Madrid), <https://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Main>.

¹⁶⁰ Garcilaso identified architecture as a sign of civilization which the Antis lacked, see discussion in Dean, *Culture of Stone*, 70.

in space conveys the feeling of order (the Inkas) defeating disorder (the Antis). The Inkas' efforts to bring order to the forest is echoed on the jaguar's face, where its sporadic oblong-spots fall into an ordered pattern of rhombuses, tokapu-like, dressing its neck.

Cummins, describing similar Inka-Anti narratives on colonial keros, concludes that, "the Anti figure not only represents a jungle warrior but is a metonymic element that stands for the savagery of the uncontrolled nature of the jungle. In this sense, the defeat of the Anti represents at one level Andean humanity's conquest over the chaos of nature."¹⁶¹ In all Inka-Anti narratives, the Inkas always occupy a more-orderly space while the Antis are depicted as chaotic embodiments of nature's wild state.

The decapitated head, whether jaguar (Fig. 2.9) or Anti (Figs 2.1 and 2.10), which is the form of the kero itself, registers the defeat of Anti chaos and its imminent transformation into "social harmony."¹⁶² In Chapter One, I argued that Autonomous wooden keros embodied the Antis and that they were brought into the Inkas' order by the carving of the wood to produce drinking vessels, which were the very symbols of civilization and sociality. In the colonial era, this imposed order was thrice communicated: first through the continued carving of chonta into a useful vessel; second, through the shaping of the vessel in the form of an Anti or feline head; and third, through the battle imagery depicted on the vessel. Dominance would also

¹⁶¹ Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, 255.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 256.

have been demonstrated by the act of drinking from the vessel where one's hand would reach around its bottom, grabbing the Anti warrior or jaguar by the throat. This act mimics the stories told of the Inkas drinking from decapitated rebels' heads after battle.¹⁶³



Figure 2.10 Roll-out of kero in the shape of an Anti Head with Inka-Anti Battle Scene, Cusco Region, Peru, 1550–1800, wood and mopa mopa, H. 21 x Diam. 16 cm., National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., cat. no. 21/7455, https://americanindian.si.edu/collections-search/objects/NMAI_231700?destination=edan_searchtab%3Fpage%3D8%26edan_q%3Dkero.

In a kero in the shape of an Anti head, the Inka-Anti battle scene again appears (Figure 2.10). The Anti is recognizable by his headband and face paint in three horizontal bands of green, yellow, and red, all of which are rendered in mopa mopa. The base of the kero is adorned in a ñucchu floral pattern similar to the floral elements of Chinese porcelain, as discussed earlier. As is seen in the Yale Peabody kero (Figure 2.9), the Inka-Anti battle presents the Anti as hurin to the Inka hanan, with vanquished Anti warriors in disarray or already dead. Perhaps, more clearly, a

¹⁶³ Ibid.

drawing of a kero from the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin that is similar in theme and composition to the keros just discussed, presents the Inka-Anti battle motif where the Inka are an organized force that conquers the wild Anti other (Figure 2.11).



Figure 2.11. Roll-out of kero with an Inka-Anti Battle Scene, Peru, 1550–1800, wood and mopa mopa, Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, drawn by Oriana Wichrowska. Image from: Mariusz S. Ziółkowski et al., “La Historia en los *Queros*: Apuntes Acerca de la Relación entre las Representaciones Figurativas y los Signos ‘Tocapus’,” in *Linguajes Visuales de los Incas*, ed. Paola González Carvajal and Tamara L. Bray, BAR International Series 1848 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2008), 170.

While other keros display the Antis hunting, dancing, and fighting Spaniards, the Inka-Anti battle narrative specifically refers to Inka history in which Tawantinsuyu warriors engaged their forest foe. In these pictorial battles, unlike historical ones, the Inkas always win. To Spanish audiences, scenes of the Inkas defeating the Antis would not only have conveyed the message that the historical Inkas were capable and fierce warriors, but these scenes also suggest that the colonial Inkas made powerful allies, especially in Spanish efforts to Christianize forest inhabitants. This was a powerful narrative in the colonial Andes because it showed

the Inkas doing what the Spaniards could not. On the keros, the irascible Antis were brought to order.

For the Inkas, these battle scenes meant much more than a history lesson. The conflict between hanan and hurin forces were analogues to ritual battles between moieties—called tinku—which were tied to agricultural production and reciprocity. Traditionally, keros were used in the feasts that followed such ritual battles.¹⁶⁴ Insightfully, Cummins points out that *t'inca*, the Quechua word meaning to toast somebody, is linguistically associated with the function and narrative of the *tinku*.¹⁶⁵ To toast is to compete, but also commemorate the resolution of conflict between two complementary forces or things. Where there is a hanan, there is its complementary opposite—an hurin. Each is necessary to the other, and the resolution of disputes between them leads to social harmony and prosperity.



Figure 2.12. Inka paccha, south highlands, Peru, 1532–1780 C.E., chonta wood, mopa mopa, and nails, 20.6 x 16.5 x 61 cm., The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, cat. no. 91.1552, <https://emuseum.mfah.org/objects/17946/ceremonial-pouring-vessel-paccha>.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 256–257.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 260.

Allen's work, as discussed above, indicates that to drink from a kero is to "go inside." The kero offers a liquid that will travel through the body, transforming that body into a vessel, which, as a result, may be understood as an extension of the kero itself. In use, the kero and the human body collaborate, rendering them—when conceived as a unit—as a *paccha*. Paccha refers to a carving into which liquid is poured and through which it flows (Figure 2.12). In the case of the paccha formed by the kero-human unit, liquid is poured into the kero and then flows through the human body. Allen, referring to pacchas in general, observes that "the use of such a vessel in ritual would have expressed a relationship to power flowing from below and from within, from the tropical forest."¹⁶⁶ The Inka-Anti battles portrayed on keros underscore how the imbiber accesses forest powers and so becomes Anti-like, which is to become jaguar-like. When keros were carved in the shape of decapitated Anti human or jaguar heads, the chicha would have been analogous with their blood, which, when consumed, imbued the Inkas with Anti kamay. The forest imagery on the paccha in Figure 2.12—the roving jaguars around the rim, the palm, the parrots, the amaru—combined with references to Inka warriors and rainbows, make clear that chicha circulation is analogous to the circulation of life energy in which highland and lowland, dryland and humid forest, are part of a cosmic "social" system that can exist only when complementary forces and substances engage one another in a mutually-dependent relationship.

¹⁶⁶ Allen, "Inkas Have Gone Inside," 198.

2 | 5 CONCLUSION

For the Inkas, identity is relational; this includes relations with social things, such as keros. Following the Spanish invasion, the Inkas' material culture no longer functioned as a part of an imperial strategy. Rather, it became a means to commemorate and preserve the Inka past and also to sustain Inka elites grappling with the colonial socio-political hierarchy. Many of the material objects that held value prior to the Spanish invasion became ever more important to the Inkas. The emergence of a new Inka kero aesthetic, which relied on mopa mopa and figurative narratives, offered the noble Inkas a stage from which to assert new roles and express their desires. The new noble status of the Inkas depended on constructing dual identities. In part, they did this through taking some of what was foreign, like the imported European and Asian aesthetics, and make it Inka, but they also took the qualities and materials of the Antis to bolster and enhance their (the Inkas') colonial experience.

While there has been fruitful research on mopa mopa, as well lengthy explorations into kero imagery, no study thus far has combined the relationship between forest imagery and forest materiality relative to Inka attitudes towards the forest. Only by considering the entire object in its context can we reach a fuller understanding. The colonial kero is fortified, yet malleable and polyvalent; it is earthquake-proof, Spaniard-proof, and glorious in all its luster and invincibility. We can understand how the colonial kero, with its subject matter and materiality,

continued to articulate and refine the Inkas' relationship with the Antis as both oppositional and complementary.

Keros present layered and related meanings in relation to the Inka-Anti dichotomy. They expose simultaneous, if not conflicting, attitudes that drew from Autonomous relations with Antisuyu. While constructing an image of the Antis in order to elevate themselves in the eyes of Spanish authorities, the Inkas simultaneously used keros to harness the powers of the forest that made the Antis strong. Keros display the practice of aligning similarities, switching perspectives, as well as reinforcing differences, all in hopes for a sovereign Indigenous future.

While I can never hope to “see” Antisuyu through Inka eyes, Chapters One and Two have sought to approximate Inka perspectives by considering the use, materiality, and decoration of keros and other items. Yet, as Valera's pictures of Paititi demonstrate, one side is not the whole picture. It is time, then, to turn the page, both figuratively and literally, to consider what the Antis saw when they looked toward the highlands from whence came both Inkas and later Spaniards. The following two chapters will focus on the Antis' positionality with regard to the Inkas, the Anti-Inka, if you will, both in the Autonomous period and in the colonial world where a new relationality, that of the Anti-Spanish, comes into being.



Figure 3.1. Detail of a Chonta Tree. Photo from: Del Amazonas: Rainforest Online Encyclopedia, <https://delamazonas.com/en/floral/palms/bactris-gasipaes/>.

CHAPTER 3 | FORESTED INTENTIONS

THE SOCIALITY OF CHONTA

3 | 1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I return to the chonta tree, the spectacular hardwood palm used by Amazonians, Inkas, and European colonizers alike (Figure 3.1). As already discussed, chonta is a resilient palm species. It is scattered throughout the Eastern Andean piedmont and Amazonian basin where it thrives in different soil types and can withstand annual flooding and historic storms. As Kohn and others who work in and learn from Amazonia report, trees, such as chonta, are active participants in the forest world; they are engaged in relationships with other forest inhabitants—other

plants, minerals, and human beings and other animals.¹⁶⁷ As sentient beings, trees occupy subject positions and so can be identified as persons. Moreover, we may understand that trees experience, watch, interact with, and perhaps even eavesdrop on, the flow of all manner of persons through the forest across time.

Although trees can and do occupy subject positions, the degree to which their subjecthood and agency exist, vacillates. Artifacts made from wood may participate in the subjecthood of the tree from which they came (see Chapter 2), but may be inert objects as well.¹⁶⁸ Questions as to when a tree possesses subjecthood are contextual and require various degrees of speculation. This chapter asks what we might learn if we accept the premise that trees and their wood are agentic subjects. Here, we highlight the spectrum of plant subjectivities and experiences that are as unfixed as Amazonia itself. Amanda M. Smith writes, “Amazonian geography rather ostentatiously flouts any notion of fixedness.”¹⁶⁹ The myriad cartographic ways to

¹⁶⁷ Kohn helps us imagine an anthropology that includes other-than-human persons, but he nonetheless centers the human through his use of Peircean semiotics to argue that humans are unique in their capacity for symbolic thought. See Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 55. Others who engage with Amazonian ontologies include, Duchesne-Winter, *Plant Theory*; Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis,” 469–88.

¹⁶⁸ Amy Penfield argues that objects *as* objects occupy an important place in Amazonian cultures. Considering the importance of chonta wood, keros, and *coqueras*, I find that their formal and material qualities, as well as their contexts of use suggest their subjecthood. For more on Penfield’s argument that scholars who study Amazonian objects ignore the importance of objects as inert objects, see her “Scattered Things: Virtue Ethics and Objectness in Indigenous Amazonia,” in “The End and After,” ed. Mads Daugbjerg and Noa Vaisman, special issue, *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 88, no. 1 (January 2023): 149–66.

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *Mapping the Amazon*, 4.

map the region (some of which were discussed in the Introduction), reveal the region's refusal to stay in a fixed and defined state. Similarly, attempts to pinpoint Amazonian wood's exact degree of subjecthood is an equally futile task. Nevertheless, in hopes of taking some initial steps, this chapter asks what the relationships between materiality, design, and sociality can teach us about others' perceptions. Santos-Granero posits that it is through the life of "subjective-objects," or objects with a degree of subjecthood, that we can find the answers.¹⁷⁰ What Santos-Granero terms subjective-objects are what I am calling "subject-objects" (see Chapter One). Regardless of the term, such things can help us understand how Amazonians perceived and interacted not just with the Inkas, but a long line of colonial Others across time.

In my interest to find out about more about Amazonian attitudes towards the Inkas and others, I will draw material evidence from both the Autonomous-era Inkas and the colonial-period Jesuit missionaries in Amazonia. One reason for leaning on objects with origins in the forest, but with lives outside of it, is that the archaeological record has scant evidence from Amazonia itself.¹⁷¹ The forests' experience with

¹⁷⁰ Santos-Granero, "Introduction: Amerindian Constructional Views of the World," in *The Occult Life of Things: Native Amazonian Theories of Materiality and Personhood*, ed. by Fernando Santos-Granero (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 19.

¹⁷¹ Amazonian archaeology is complex for many reasons pertaining to the ephemeral nature of organic materials and the shifting conditions of riverbeds and humidity levels of the forest. Additionally, before colonial contact, European diseases reached far into the forest and decimated populations well before colonial documentation efforts could occur. See: Alf Hornborg, "Anthropology," in *Rethinking the Andes-Amazonia Divide: A Cross-Disciplinary Exploration*, ed. Adrian J. Pearce et al., (London: UCL Press, 2020), 58.

decomposition and flood, fire and deforestation, and other forms of dramatic change (whether natural, agricultural, atmospheric, or from human activity), is a part of its ever-changing character. I will also draw on various ethnohistoric and ethnographic sources from forest cultures across Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Brazil in which myriad distinct languages are spoken (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). I understand that my approach—drawing information from across the Amazon—may tend to flatten our understanding of diverse Amazonian attitudes towards others, but a degree of conscientious speculation seems to me to be the only responsible path forward in a project of this magnitude.

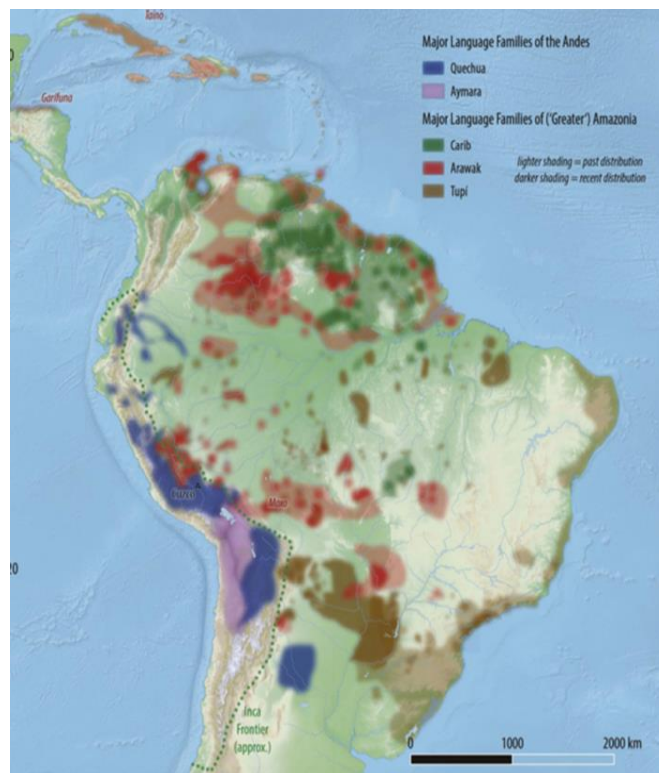


Figure 3.2 Language families across the Andes and Amazonia. Image sourced from: Paul Heggarty, “Linguistics,” in *Rethinking the Andes-Amazonia Divide: A Cross-Disciplinary Exploration*, ed. Adrian J. Pearce et al. (London: UCL Press, 2020), 37.

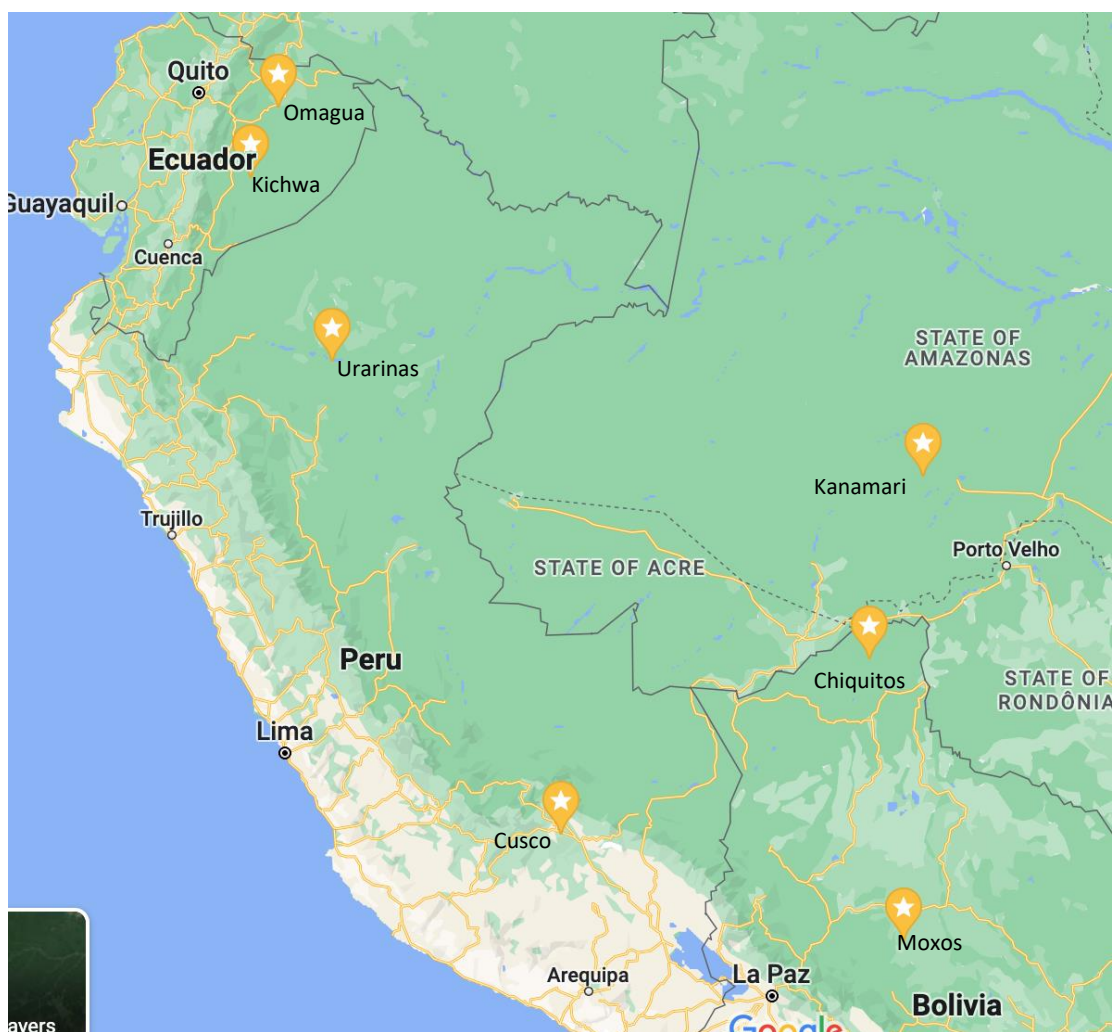


Figure 3.3 Screen shot of Google Map presenting cultural locations, including the two mission locations, Moxos and Chiquitos, discussed in this chapter. Image by author using Google Maps, <https://www.google.com/maps/@-7.4267664,-67.8410992,5.41z?entry=ttu>.

This chapter will first offer a brief review of chonta's broader role within Amazonia. In particular, I am interested in Amazonia's sociality, where everything (human and other-than-human) might have subjecthood, and where every chonta tree is potentially an Amazonian subject. Additionally we will come to understand how chonta instantiates ancestral presences. I will then look at the use of chonta in the form of the Inka kero from the Amazonian perspective to argue that 1) chonta's subjectivity is relational, 2) through a relational perspective of the self, as modeled by

chonta, binary concepts of the self/other and owner/object are necessarily unstable, and 3) that it is through the chonta's ability to make partnerships that Amazonian perspectives of the Inkas are more about recognizing relationality among diverse peoples than they are about identifying differences between them.

The latter half of this chapter will pursue additional avenues of thought by considering a second artifact made of wood. *Coqueras*, or colonial wooden boxes meant to hold *coca*, *yerba maté*, or candies, were made by Amazonians in Jesuit missionary workshops for trade. I will discuss how the carved coquera is both a product of the forest and its carver, and how its imagery is a sensorial expression of the forest's vitality and subjecthood. By considering the coquera's imagery, tactility, and scent, I will argue that the coquera worked to preserve or enable Amazonian autonomy. Exploring coqueras' subjecthood offers us a critical entry point to understand how the human sensorium, or a combination of senses, was employed to resist objectification and instead, to extend Amazonia well beyond any geographic or cultural constraints.

3 | 2 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO CHONTA

Amazonian terms for the forest and its peoples reflect a relational perspective that can offer ways to think about chonta or wood more broadly. The Kichwa peoples of Sarayaku in Ecuador use the term "*Kawsak Sacha*" or "living forest," which refers to "the forest [that] is made up entirely of living selves and the communicative relations that they have with each other.... These persons live together in

community...and carry their lives in a manner that is similar to human beings....”¹⁷²

This quotation reveals that the “more-than-human assemblage” that makes up the forest community, and “implies [that] multispecies life and even nonlife [are] always entangled together in emergent collectives.”¹⁷³

In Amazonia, not only can objects have subjecthood, but what were once inert objects can become subjects, meaning that objects can go through a transformative process to obtain subjecthood.¹⁷⁴ Because of an object’s potential subjectivity, proponents of “the ontological turn” and eco-semiotics argue that distinctions between objects and subjects ought to be dissolved.¹⁷⁵ Likewise, many binaries melt away in Amazonia. For example, the fluid relationship between “nature” and “culture” can be seen in our discussion of chonta. The tree is simultaneously understood to be both a cultivated and uncultivated part of the forest. Amazonian peoples manage the forest to create groves of food-producing and other trees. Chonta also depends on human and non-human animal activity, like the spreading of its fruit through consumption and excretion.

¹⁷² Stefano Varese, “Amazonian Communities: Shaping the Ethics of Cosmocentrism,” *Historia Ambiental Latinoamericana y Caribeña* 12, no. 3 (December 2022): 109–10.

¹⁷³ Amanda M. Smith, *Mapping the Amazon*, 20.

¹⁷⁴ Hornborg, “The Political Economy of Technofetishism: Agency, Amazonian Ontologies, and Global Magic,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 35. Santos-Granero also notes that not all subjectivities are the same, as one subject can have a “strong, autonomous soul” another can have “weaker forms of subjectivity or none at all”; see, Santos-Granero, “Introduction,” 13.

¹⁷⁵ For more literature on the ontological turn see the following: Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*; Kohn, *How Forests Think*; Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis.”

Chonta trees are connected to the way people experience the passage of time. Huaorani peoples of Ecuador, for example, measure time through chonta palm seasons, merging agricultural cycles with ancestral relations.¹⁷⁶ They consider chonta groves to be nuclear families; when a chonta tree gives birth to shoots, she is a mother and they are her children.¹⁷⁷ Chonta groves are also understood to be parts of human families and to embody ancestors. As a result, chonta forests are reserved as spaces for human marriage and other celebrations. Weeklong drinking parties to celebrate bountiful harvests take place under the palm's canopy, where the trees witness and participate in a community's joy.¹⁷⁸ In the forest, people eat the chonta's fruits as a way to engage with their own ancestors and to mark times of remembrance, transition, and plenty for both the living and the dead.¹⁷⁹

Chonta trees lend themselves to the making of utilitarian wares and objects for use in warfare by human persons. While young chonta shoots were and are used to make minor things like blowpipes, aged chonta was better for piercing and carving tools, as well as spears. Spears were dangerous because of their hardwood bodies and lethal shape, and also because they could be imbued with "magical" power. Jivaro peoples, who reside along the Marañón River in Ecuador and Peru, deem chonta spears to be more damaging than those with steel tips. The Jivaro use the term *Tsarutama* for the "magical" force which imbues chonta with greater-than-natural

¹⁷⁶ Rival, *Trekking through History*, 46.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

powers and “magical” properties.¹⁸⁰ Combined with “magic,” chonta weaponry also possesses ancestral powers, strengthening their use in fights. Chonta was so crucial in warfare that, to weaken opposing factions, some groups would destroy entire palm families eradicating their opponent’s weaponry source, while using the felled chonta to fashion weapons for themselves. Moreover, because a group’s cultivation of palm forests was linked to their ancestry, the destruction of a palm grove was an act of aggression that damaged the ancestors’ ability to protect their descendants and ensure future prosperity.¹⁸¹

Chonta was also a trade item linked to a culture’s political and economic wherewithal. For example, the Omagua peoples of Ecuador, in the cloud forests near Quito, traded with the Quijos, who distributed chonta to the rest of the Andes. The Omagua peoples were so successful at the trade that the heavily trafficked trade route signaled an Omagua monopoly.¹⁸² As a result of the Omagua’s control over northern Amazonian-highland trade, their chiefdoms expanded and eventually power was centralized.¹⁸³

In summary, chonta speaks to many relationships integral to Amazonia and can occupy various degrees of subjecthood and agency. Chonta groves were families akin, and related, to human families; their fruits were both the gifts and the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 137.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 85–86.

¹⁸² Nicholas J.D Loughlin et al., “Ecological Consequences of Post-Columbian Indigenous Depopulation in the Andean–Amazonian Corridor,” *Nature Ecology and Evolution* 2, no. 8 (2018): 1233–36.

¹⁸³ Rival, *Trekking through History*, 27.

embodiments of ancestors. They helped keep time and history; they were wartime weapons, and they could gift their families with socio-political and economic power through trade. Not only does chonta have a use-value to humans through its ability to be made into objects, used in war, and traded, but, as I will discuss below, there are many ways in which chonta was used in trade as part of a complex process that I will call friend-making, for reasons that will be explained later.

3 | 3 CHONTA AS A BOUNDARY CROSSER

The prior section describes chonta's many roles within Amazonia. One of its most important functions was its ability to transform the unknown into the known, in other words, to convert a potential foe into a friend. Chonta accomplishes this task when used as a trade item, especially when it is carried outside Amazonia to parts and peoples unknown. Amazonians have long-established trade relationships with other parts of the Andes. In the Autonomous era, fruits, vegetables, "magical" plants like coca, live animals including anacondas and caiman, animal skins and pelts, and feathers were popular trade goods.¹⁸⁴ Today tropical flora, which was cultivated beginning in the third millennium B.C.E, is still found on the Peruvian coast.¹⁸⁵ While the evolution and distribution of plants is relatively easy to trace, many aspects of chonta's experience outside the forest present thornier problems. We are aware of

¹⁸⁴ Bartholomew Dean, *Urarina Society, Cosmology, and History in Peruvian Amazon* (Gainesville; University Press of Florida, 2009), 207.

¹⁸⁵ For more on the coastal cultivation of Amazonian plants, see, Barbara Pickersgill, "The Archaeological Record of Chili Peppers (*Capsicum* spp.) and the Sequence of Plant Domestication in Peru," *American Antiquity* 34, no. 1 (January 1969): 54–61.

archaeological sites and communities that funneled chonta from the forest into the highlands, like the Omagua site near Quito (mentioned above), Espíritu Pampa (see Chapter One), and Chachapoyas and the Q'ero sites, which will be discussed below. Nevertheless, the full extent of the wood's precise origins, the value of chonta in trade, and the full extent of that trade, remains obscure.¹⁸⁶

There is some indication that the Chontaces, Chachapoya chiefdoms (*curacazgos*) in the ceja de selva, imported chonta (thereby accounting for the name Chontaces) as well as other Amazonian timbers for the manufacture of spears, keros, and firewood which were given in tribute to the Inkas.¹⁸⁷ Another possible trade route went through the Q'ero region, a culturally and ecologically diverse zone which is today located in the Department of Cusco. Q'ero sits in the high ceja de montaña and extends down into the valleys of the sub-tropical forest. Q'ero peoples—a name by which they self-identify—were probably first called Q'eros by the Inkas because of their skill in woodworking, and specifically as kerokamayoqs, meaning “creators of keros.”¹⁸⁸ According to records, in one day Q'ero traders could traverse glaciers in their highland home, cross pastures, and enter forested regions from where they obtained chonta and other hardwoods.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ For an excellent study of trade at Espíritu Pampa during the Middle Horizon see, Rosenfeld et al., “Beyond Exotic Goods.”

¹⁸⁷ Inge Schjellerup, “Over the Mountains, Down into the Ceja de Selva: Inka Strategies and Impacts in the Chachapoyas Region,” in *The Inka Empire: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. Izumi Shimada (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015): 319.

¹⁸⁸ Cummins, *Toast with the Inca*, 23–24.

¹⁸⁹ Steven Webster, “The South Central Highlands and the Q'ero Cultural Region: An Ethnic Enclave,” in *Returning to Q'ero: Sustaining Indigeneity in an Andean*

Considering the numerous cross-cultural trade sites located on the fringes of the eastern Inka empire from north to south, we can surmise that many, diverse Amazonian peoples participated in the chonta trade and had done so over many centuries. During the period of Inka dominance, various Amazonians groups capitalized on the Inkas' seemingly insatiable desire for chonta and chonta products. As a result, long-established relations between Amazonian communities and the highlands intensified.¹⁹⁰

Through trade, Amazonians forged partnerships with potential enemies like the Inkas. By interacting with different persons, Amazonians recognize that each individual self is forever entangled in relations with infinite others. For Amazonians, alterity is based on differences in appearance, cultural traditions, and language; these differences necessitate the crossing of cultural and other boundaries.¹⁹¹ Subject-objects helped facilitate interconnections since they embody both the forest and all forest persons, as discussed in Chapter One. The Amazonian concept of cosmic interconnectedness is elaborated by Uzendoski who refers to the “cosmic body” where selfhood in storytelling and songs of the Napo Runa (Ecuador) is not only constructed in relation to other humans and other-than-humans but also are configured according to fractal principles in which persons (as broadly defined)

Ecosystem 1969–2020, ed. Steven Webster (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 4.

¹⁹⁰ Wilkinson, “Incas and Arawaks,” 283.

¹⁹¹ Santos-Granero, “Boundaries Are Made to Be Crossed: The Magic and Politics of the Long-Lasting Amazon/Andes Divide,” *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 9, no. 4: 547.

cannot be conceived of independently, but are always only partial realizations of a relational cosmos.¹⁹² Amazonian relationships with Others are just a part of this inextricably entwined fractal cosmos.¹⁹³

The nature of relationships between Amazonians and unknown Others varies and depends on intentions and context. In these relationships “friendship” is more valued than “kinship.” For example, in the Jivaro (Shuar) culture of northern Peru and eastern Ecuador, when two related men, such as brothers, enter a trading partnership they refer to themselves not as brothers, but as “friends.”¹⁹⁴ Santos-Granero argues that the shift from kinship to friendship is a stronger tie that “creates bonds of trust, co-operation, and intimacy that may be stronger than those existing between close kin....”¹⁹⁵ Whereas kin are compelled by cultural convention to operate according to accepted tradition governing consanguinity and affinity, friends act not because they have to, but because they want to. Friendship helps explain why Amazonians, over

¹⁹² Uzendoski, “Textuality, Kinship, and the Amazonian Theories of Being in the World: An Analysis of Motherhood and Yachay in Two Napo Runa Songs,” in “Amazonian Literatures,” ed. Lesley Wylie, special issue, *Hispanic Issues On Line* 16 (Fall 2014): 130.

¹⁹³ The notion of social fractality is introduced by the anthropologist Roy Wagner, who works in New Ireland (Papua New Guinea). He introduced the concept of a “fractal person” to explain how, in New Ireland, great-men societies as a whole and any constituent of them can only be a partial realization; see Wagner “The Fractal Person,” in *Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia*, ed. by Maurice Godelier and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 163.

¹⁹⁴ Santos-Granero, “Of Fear and Friendship: Amazonian Sociality beyond Kinship and Alterity,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13, no. 1 (March 2007): 4.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3–4. Santos-Granero argues that scholarly focus on Amazonian relations of kinship should be differentiated from those of friendship.

millennia, have engaged in trade that was not necessary. While their forest home provided for all their needs, trade with “friends” mitigated the chances of hostile relationships on the part of non-forest peoples who were desirous of forest resources. For example, through receptivity to trade many Amazonians were able to manage Inkas hostility.

My thesis is that trade materials, such as chonta, were actors in friend-making relationships or an economy of connections between diverse peoples.¹⁹⁶ We might call it an economy of amicability. In the Autonomous era, trans-Amazonian trade networks connected cultures that valued systems of reciprocity, complementarity, cooperative competition, and recognized sociality between and among humans and other-than-humans.¹⁹⁷ Regardless of whether Amazonian cultures had fearful, predatory, or cordial relations with the Inkas in the last century of the Autonomous era, trading partnerships were, for Amazonian peoples, expressions of sociality based on integrating the Other and recognizing interconnectness.¹⁹⁸ Amazonians intentionally sought trade with different, competing cultures, like the Inkas, to establish not just trade, but rather to deepen relations across cultural divides. From an Amazonian perspective, trade goods were not valued for material worth alone, but

¹⁹⁶ For a discussion of somewhat similar trade relationships in the Pacific basin, see, Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 200.

¹⁹⁷ Varese, “Amazonian Communities,” 125.

¹⁹⁸ Santos-Granero, “Of Fear and Friendship,” 2.

rather their ability to produce trading partnerships precisely because they could span cultural and other differences, thereby transforming competitors into allies.¹⁹⁹

We can augment our understanding of the Amazonian economy of amicability, by drawing on the work of human ecologist Alf Hornborg, who argues that the transformation of objects into subjects in the context of political economy “fundamentally concerns the social organization of human-object relationships, and thus ultimately shows social agency is delegated to artifacts.”²⁰⁰ We might think of chonta-persons as ambassadors from Amazonian communities to the Inkas (and other non-Amazonian peoples) whose primary function was to establish a social relationship not based on commodity value but on friendship in a way that enabled Amazonians to include competitors in their system of relations.²⁰¹ Once a chonta-person was traded into the hands of the Inkas, it retained its ambassadorial mission, regardless of the uses to which the Inkas’ put it. For the Inkas, the kero may have demonstrated dominance over Antisuyu, a region they could never fully annex (see Chapter One), but from the Amazonian perspective, the chonta-person could incorporate the Inkas as a part of its relational self, integrating the Inkas into Amazonia’s social network and, therefore, into the forest world and its fractal cosmos.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 3.

²⁰⁰ Hornborg, “The Political Economy,” 36.

²⁰¹ This notion that trees resist commodification is apparent today. One example is that trees have legally protected rights and are discussed as Subjects in Ecuador; see: Joel Beacher, “How Trees Get Standing: An Incremental Approach to Rights of Nature Advocacy,” *Environmental Claims Journal* 33, no. 2 (2021): 91–107.

The subjecthood of a chonta-person in the form of a kero, can be traced through its materiality. While the Amazonian's exact methods of chonta extraction are unknown, it can be assumed that cut or felled trees were gathered and then moved along riverine trade routes until they could be exported to highlanders, who then managed the trade throughout the Andean region. In the period of Inka autonomy we can imagine the following scenario: chonta arrived in the hands of a kerokamayoc who cut it into blocks; it was then roughly hollowed out by an adze to form the shape of a beaker; next, its exterior was smoothed and meticulously incised with Inka geometric motifs in order to clothe its nude body, readying it for a new life as a subject of the Inka empire. The chonta-person as kero then assumed its integral part in Inka feasting rituals in which it helped solidify Inka imperial dominance.

Although the kero dressed the part, underneath its incised vestments, from an Amazonian perspective, it still embodied its forest community and was still on a mission to recreate Others, in this case the Inkas, as friends. This mission expanded the forest realm, widening its circle of friends into the highlands and onto the coast. We might think about the differences between Inka and Amazonian perspectives in terms of what the historian James Lockhart called "Double Mistaken Identity," a phrase coined to describe the situation in sixteenth-century New Spain in which "each side [Indigenous or Spanish] takes it that a given form or concept [operates] in much the same manner as in its own tradition, and hardly takes cognizance of the other

side's interpretation."²⁰² Because Amazonians and Inkas were only in partial communication, both sides could easily sustain their own understandings of how chonta-kero-persons were functioning in furtherance of their own interests.

Viveiros de Castro's theory of perspectivism (discussed in the Introduction) helps us understand how readily Amazonian thought assimilates new things, including new peoples, new practices, and new ideas.²⁰³ It does so by not insisting on a universally-agreed upon reality. Rather, humans, animals, plants, spirits, and more, have similar perspectives, but they inhabit different realities. Perspectivism holds that chonta has its own lived experience, personhood, and intentionality. Chonta is also a part of an "ecology of selves," where everything is interconnected and what is external can be also internal, or in this case what is unknown can simultaneously also be known (see a discussion of "ecology of selves" in the Introduction).²⁰⁴ To put it another way, Amazonian perspectives readily convert what is "them" into part of "us." Through the use of chonta-kero-persons, the Inkas became (whether they knew it or not) a part of Amazonian sociality and an integral part of their fractal cosmos. Not only did Inkas participate in Amazonia, they did so as "friends."

Traces of the chonta's experience of becoming an Inka kero, or, from the Amazonian point of view, re-making the Inka as friends, are evident in the kero's surfaces. Mostly, keros have smoothed exteriors decorated with the Inkas' geometric

²⁰² Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 445.

²⁰³ Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis," 470.

²⁰⁴ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 95.

patterns or, after the Spanish invasion, figural forms in mopa mopa . In contrast, kero interiors are typically rough with marks of the tools that hollowed them (see Chapter One). Sometimes chonta split in the process of becoming a kero, signaling that a miscalculated adze blow had separated parts of the wood or where the wood had riven, rather than serve the Inkas. Also, over time some keros cracked due to (mis)use or a lack of care in the dry climate of the highlands, which is much different than the humid tropical forest environment. The various characteristics of the kero (polished and rough, and sometimes cracked) can be viewed in light of the chonta's subjecthood to reveal the dynamic processes of social relations. The smooth exterior and rough interior also visually position the kero as a cooperative entity wherein the chonta-person exists as an Amazonian within the "ordered" Inka design, wearing the Inkas' gift of textiles.

Whereas the Inkas would see the transformation and owning of chonta as a part of their larger narrative of domesticating and dominating the Antis, an Amazonian way of understanding this transformation and ownership was much more nuanced. It was also a fundamental act in making the Inkas into friends. Amazonian peoples recognized that power is exerted through ownership and so is often asymmetrical, but it can also be reciprocal or become reciprocal, depending on the nature of the owner's connection to the subject-object. For the Urarina (peoples of the Peruvian Amazon Basin in Loreto) ownership may involve a degree of subjugation, where subject-object maintains only a "semi-autonomous" position; however,

subject-objects are deemed equal if egalitarian relationships are sustained.²⁰⁵

Relationships are flexible and the power, or lack of it, can also shift. There are several words for “owner” throughout Amazonia. Mostly the word implies asymmetrical bonds but ones that always are tied to a partnership of reciprocity.²⁰⁶ From an Amazonian perspective, we might suspect that while the chonta lent itself to the Inkas to become a drinking vessel, the Inkas gave it, through incised motifs, pretty garments, filled it with chicha, and engaged it in commensal ritual, creating a reciprocal bond that inherently formed an amicable relationship.

Because chonta, whether inside or outside forest, is always an Amazonian subject, we can posit that its entry into Inka sociality is an example of the wood crossing cultural boundaries and “friend making” along the way. Rather than reiterating the Inkas’ perspective, which entailed civilizing the forest, we can attempt to see the kero in another way. Perhaps from Amazonia’s perspective—which is the kero’s perspective—the transformation of chonta into kero performed a second transformation, that of Inkas from potential foes into friends. The chonta-kero-person benefited through a mutual relationship with the Inkas in its new use as a drinking vessel, making the Inkas companions and extending the reach of Amazonia beyond its forest domain.

²⁰⁵ Santos–Granero, “Introduction,” 20–21.

²⁰⁶ Luiz Costa, *The Owners of Kinship: Asymmetrical Relations in Indigenous Amazonia* (Chicago: Hau Books, 2017), 3–5.

3 | 4 THE SENSUALITY OF COQUERAS

The prior section treated the transformation of chonta into keros by Andean hands. This section looks at a broader use of hardwood palms in the facture of coqueras. There are many paths that could be pursued in the discussion of coqueras including their entanglements with Christian conversion efforts, European-style markets and commodification, the theft of Indigenous land and resources, and many others. Here, my discussion focuses on the ways coqueras functioned as forest persons beyond Amazonia and also beyond Amazonian-Inka relations. In this section I am interested in the relationship between Amazonians and settler colonists and how that relationship can be seen, felt, and even smelled in small, carved wooden boxes exported from Amazonia.

Spaniards colonizing the Andes seem to have accepted the Inkas' characterization of Amazonian peoples as barbarians, as discussed in Chapter One. In addition to *Indios de guerra* (hostile Indians) the phrase "*indios bravos sin ley ni rey*" (savage Indians without law or king) was frequently used to describe the diverse peoples of Amazonia.²⁰⁷ Also detailed in Chapter One was the fact that soon after the Spanish conquest, the Amazonian frontier became a refuge for displaced and rebellious Inkas and other Indigenous highlanders. Enslaved Africans and poor mestizos also found a home in the eastern forests.²⁰⁸ In the montaña region, Spaniards lived on the lands granted through the *encomienda* system, while Jesuits and

²⁰⁷ Varese, "Amazonian Communities," 127.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

Franciscans opened missions. These frontier spaces hosted trading posts where Amazonian peoples obtained colonial goods such as steel tools (mostly axes and machetes). Relationships between Amazonians and Spanish settlers rapidly turned tumultuous as the latter frequently captured Indigenous people whom they sold as *encomendados*, or slaves. Some Amazonians apparently responded to this time of turmoil by becoming *correrías* (runners) who kidnapped other Amazonians whom they sold for profit and to protect themselves, which they did by establishing personal partnerships with the European outsiders.²⁰⁹

Before too long in many places Spanish-Amazonian interactions in the montaña region were not deemed worth the effort or the dangers presented by the growing hostility of Amazonian peoples. *Correrías* were pressured to trek deep in the forest to acquire more labor to feed the demands of the increasingly weakened *encomiendas*.²¹⁰ As *correrías* journeyed further into Amazonia, once large and centralized riparian cultures disbanded and people sought protection in the trees. Many Amazonian communities were reduced to nuclear families with small scale farming and slash and burn agriculture.

In the eighteenth century, Amazonians regrouped into regional alliances and built partnerships with *cimarrones* (colonial fugitives). With tensions between colonizer and colonized increasing, Amazonian resentment of colonial rule and

²⁰⁹ For example, around 1750, one captive *alma* (soul) could be traded for one steel axe. See, DeBoer, "Pillage and Production in the Amazon: A View through the Conibo of the Ucayali Basin, Eastern Peru," *World Archaeology* 18, no. 2 (October, 1986): 241.

²¹⁰ Varese, "Amazonian Communities," 129.

mistreatment erupted, culminating in a series of rebellions. Amazonians, along with Andeans, launched large scale uprisings along the frontier. In 1742, for example, the rebellion led by mestizo highlander Juan Santos Atahualpa included cimarrones and Amazonians who fought alongside one another for their sovereignty, eventually driving the colonialists out of the forest for decades.

In western Amazonia, an alternative to flight deeper into the forest, which came with its own perils, and outright rebellion, with the risks it entailed, was presented by Jesuit missions.²¹¹ The Jesuits had founded missions starting around 1638 and operated them until their expulsion from Spanish territories in 1767. In general, the missions were located on the fringes of Spanish colonies. In the Andes missions were solitary complexes that were isolated from the highlands. Jesuits set up craft workshops in the forest where Amazonians could produce trade items. These workshops brought Amazonians into close contact with, if not dependence on, the missionaries facilitating Jesuit religious conversion efforts. The objects produced in these missions reveal much about the encounters between Indigenous peoples and the colonial other, and so offer us the opportunity to see the experience from submerged Amazonian perspectives.²¹² The items created by Indigenous peoples at missions give voice to various subjects—men, women, religious leaders, warriors, merchants, and

²¹¹ Mary-Elizabeth Reeve, “Regional Interaction in the Western Amazon: The Early Colonial Encounter and the Jesuit Years: 1538–1767,” *Ethnohistory* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 109. Approximately 60,000 Indigenous peoples are estimated to have lived in the “sphere of the missions” around 1600 (119).

²¹² As noted in the Introduction, I borrow the term “submerged perspectives” from Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*.

other classes of people. The particular item on which this discussion will focus figured as a luxury good. Called coqueras, after their use to hold coca leaves, and also yerberas (herb boxes), they were exported to colonial elites as containers for all manner of small, precious items.

Coqueras were produced at the very time that Amazonian autonomy was under dire threat. Because coqueras were desirable trade items, the carving of them gave Amazonians some degree of economic wherewithal. Through trade, Amazonians gained access to steel and other highland resources. I suggest that we can understand the function of coqueras not just as sources of economic gain, but as another form of forest person through which Amazonians sought to forge new friends and counter the prevailing perception of forest dwellers as savages lacking redeeming qualities. As chonta-persons did in earlier relationships with Inkas, here again wood crossed terrains, establishing personal relationships with people who would never see nor meet the people of Amazonia.





Figures (top to bottom) 3.4 a, 3.4 b, 3.4 c, 3.4 d. Moxos or Chiquitos Coquera, Upper Peru (now Bolivia), c. 1770, carved wood with silver mounts, 16.5 × 29.2 × 26.7 cm., Thomas Coulborn & Sons Antique Collection, Sutton Coldfield, <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/spanish-colonial-coquera-coca-box-from-upper-peru-now-bolivia-moxos-or-chiquitos>.

A coquera for sale in the Thomas Coulborn & Sons Antique Collection is typical of colonial coqueras made in Jesuit missions (Figures 3.4 a–d). The box is in the form of a bi-valve shell. While three winged-cherubic busts unfurl into legs raising the box slightly, other coqueras lack legs and so sit flat (Figure 3.5). Upon close inspection of the cherub-like legs, we note that although the visages resemble those of European putti, they appear to be wearing plumed headdresses, similar to Amazonian feathered headpieces (Figure 3.4 c).

The silver lock adorning the face of the box connects to a convex lid with carved gadroons interspersed with vegetal patterns. The entire box is heavily carved except for its slightly stippled negative spaces. A central motif of a young and genderless pair occupies the center of the lid, more slightly towards the silver hinges on its backside (Figure 3.4 b). The pair sits next one another with their knees almost touching; their arms stretch across their torsos with the right hand of one covering the left hand of the other. The one with its hand upon the other's also touches its complement's cheek. Above the top of the pair's heads is a long-necked bird with one claw resting on each child's head. The bird crooks its head down with its long beak, seemingly picking something out of the hair of the individual on the proper left (viewer's right).

Surrounding the pair with the surmounting bird is a sinewy, vine-like border forming a loose shell shape. Leafed plants joyfully meander around the central scene, suggesting that the pair and the bird are enveloped by a living forest. Given the repeated shell-like shapes, the coquera presents a lush environment combining, water, land, and air motifs.

Around the sides of the coquera, the living forest is presented in rectangular panels separated by both the box's shape and carved borders. All panels have vegetal ornamentation and feature verdant scenes. Flanking the silver lock, the front two panels display naked youths, holding on to and balancing upon the surrounding vines. There is also a scene of a naked 'human' eating fruit; a vine unfurls from its posterior, perhaps identifying the figure as a monkey. Notably, a cherubic human with wings

emerges from a tropical trumpet-like flower; indeed, it appears to be the bloom (Figure 3.4 d). Like other of the empaneled images, it gives the feeling of a living environment in which the subjecthood of plants is conveyed through human-flora relations.

Like many other coqueras, this box was fabricated at the Jesuit workshops of either Moxos or Chiquitos in Upper Peru (northern Bolivia). Coqueras like this often have shapes and designs possibly inspired by decorative pattern books that circulated in the colonial Andes. Similar designs appear on contemporaneous ornate silver boxes, made to cosset sweets or yerba mate at the highland silver-mining center of Potosí. The type of wood used by the carvers of northern Bolivia is unknown. Some identify the wood as granadilla, which is known for its vibrant red color. This color is not readily apparent in all coqueras, however. All things considered, coqueras were likely made from a vast array of local hardwood palms, including chonta.

Returning to Figure 3.4, while the two anthropomorphic figures on the lid could depict unrelated human beings, twins held a special place within Moxos society. For the Moxos, twins have three parents: mother, father, and spirit entity. While one twin was conceived by a human male and female, the other was spirit-created.²¹³ In Amazonia, more widely, twins are featured in many stories in which

²¹³ Alfred Métraux, “The Social Organization and Religion of the Mojo and Manasi,” *Primitive Man: Quarterly Bulletin of the Catholic Anthropological Conference* 16, no. 1/2 (January–April 1943): 17.

they partner with birds.²¹⁴ In one story, twins communicate with animals, particularly birds-of-prey, while in another, twins were lost until a bird gave them a ride home; this latter story also indicates the humans and birds are related:

[T]he buzzard-man's taste for meat is the moral flaw that causes him to transform into a carrion-eating bird. The vulture man loses his outer human form and the ability to speak words in the everyday human domain. But in his own reality, where his inner body is manifest, the buzzard-man speaks, and he can speak quite elegantly. And so it goes for many other animal and plant species.²¹⁵

This story highlights that even without words, all persons (i.e., all subject-objects) can communicate in their own ways; just because human ears cannot hear them, does not mean they are not speaking “quite elegantly.”

The floral motifs on the coquera signal the wood's vitality despite its transformation from a tree into a box. As a vital being, might the coquera speak? Uzendoski describes the Amazonian social world—specifically that of the Napo Runa, a Kichwa-speaking society of the Ecuadorian Amazon—as a cosmic body, an assemblage of persons (human and otherwise, animate and inert). The Napo Runa analogize the flow of life energy as “lines ... that move through the [human] body, plants, animals, and the landscape”; Uzendoski explains that these “lines” function as a kind of text that emphasizes “the somatic truth that all things are in a constant state of transformation and re-circulation” and “can be ‘read’ in the landscape via

²¹⁴ Uzendoski, “Beyond Orality,” 56, 61. Uzendoski defines “text” as making a narrative through multimodal practices the traces of which are storytelling, dance, song/music, ritual, productions, and more.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

experience.”²¹⁶ Uzendoski also posits that “[a]ny sentient being that sends a message can be said to be ‘speaking,’ as in the imagery that one receives in a dream or curing session involving hallucinogenic plants. Rivers, mountains, and other soul-possessing beings, even plants, can and do speak in this way....”²¹⁷ Human beings convert this speech into words and also into gestures, sounds, and images in order to recreate the “speech” for other humans. As sentient beings (or, subject-objects), coqueras can and do speak.

At the missions, coqueras’ subjectivity was the production of person, place, and material. While coqueras were sentient, as we saw with chonta and keros, coqueras could also be imbued with the agency of their creators. Again drawing on Gell’s concept of distributed personhood (see Chapter One), coqueras can be identified as extensions of Amazonia and Amazonians’ wants and needs.²¹⁸ Often subject-objects gain agency from their makers in the act of production; through the act of carving, the craftsman transforms the subjectivity of the coquera, mediating its degree of agency.²¹⁹ To simplify, the subject-object can transform to become a relational part of the makers’ self, which may or may not endow the subject-object with the makers’ desires. The various degrees to which this can happen challenge the

²¹⁶ Ibid., 61.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 62.

²¹⁸ Gell, *Art and Agency*, 103.

²¹⁹ Santos-Granero, “Introduction,” 13. Anthropologist Tim Ingold argues that the idea of material as vessels for “souls” is a Western concept derived from Greek philosophy; see Ingold, “Materials against Materiality,” *Archaeological Dialogues* 14, no. 1 (June 2007): 1–16. Others, including Santos-Granero, however, argue that the ways subjecthood and agency operate in Amazonia do allow for the “ensouling” of objects.

reader to acknowledge the unfixed and speculative state of wood's subjectivity and agency.

The social anthropologist María A. Guzmán-Gallegos borrows the concept of “secondary agents” from Gell to identify the ways the Kichwa-speaking Runa of Ecuador see subject-objects as extensions of a maker's vitality and as a means to strengthen that maker's own subjectivity and power.²²⁰ She suggests that we can view secondary agents as contributions to a person's identity involving any relations with another being.²²¹ To elaborate, secondary agents are ascribed with the qualities of their makers or owners and participate in their strengths, skills, and personae. According to Guzmán-Gallegos, “they relate in different ways to a person's vitality, breath, and will.”²²²

We can now identify both keros and coqueras as likely sentient envoys for Amazonia. Whereas keros were produced in the highlands from Amazonian wood, coqueras were made by Amazonian artists in the forest. As trade objects, they served as extensions of their makers, playing a role in a friendship economy. The greater number of coqueras produced, and the farther they traveled, the more the makers' identities could grow, strengthen, and form social bonds by incorporating what was

²²⁰ Guzmán-Gallegos, “Identity Cards, Abducted Footprints, and the Book of San Gonzalo: The Power of Textual Objects in Runa Worldview,” in *The Occult Life of Things: Native Amazonian Theories of Materiality and Personhood*, ed. Fernando Santos-Granero (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009), 224–25.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 225. Secondary agents have varying degrees of subjectivity depending on their makers' intentions; for example, things such as darts, made from chonta, possess a weakened subjectivity and have lesser degrees of agency.

²²² *Ibid.*

unknown into their relational cosmos. Amazonians in missions, exploited and exposed to disease, lived precarious lives. That they created ambassadorial subject-objects, who would help them maintain a degree of economic autonomy and also gain them allies through friend-making, is a reasonable supposition.

Through the subjecthood of coqueras, avenues of communication between makers, coqueras, and buyers were opened. These avenues are what Uzendoski, referring to the flow of life energy, called lines (see discussion above). Moreover, these lines, can be understood both as text and as speech, interaction, and communication.²²³ He describes the lines as moving in curves, loops and circles, which might well be the way we describe the flora on numerous coqueras. The *coquerero* (coquera maker), rendered these curving and looping lines into imagery in order to share them with other human beings. His act of rendering the lines visible, enabled those at far ends of branching trade routes to participate in the intersubjective speech of the forest. The consumer—the endpoint of trade—was drawn into an intersubjective experience and, in the process was transformed from stranger into friend.

²²³ Uzendoski, “Beyond Orality,” 56.



Figure 3.5. Moxos or Chiquitos (?), Coquera, Bolivia, c. 1775–90, wood and silver, H. 16 x W. 28 cm., Sotheby's, <https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/worlds-within-worlds-works-from-the-collection-of-peter-petrou/south-america-alto-peru-now-bolivia-18th-century>.



Figure 3.6. Moxos or Chiquitos (?), Coquera, Bolivia, c. 1775–90, wood and silver, 18.4 x 21.6 x 23.5 cm., Los Angeles County Museum of Art, cat. no. M.2007.3, <https://collections.lacma.org/node/213445>.

Coqueras invite a friendly experience with the forest through their bucolic forest imagery. Most coqueras, like the one from Thomas Coulborn & Sons Antique Collection, depict a lush and non-threatening environment (Figures 3.5 and 3.6). There are no dangerous animals and the people are cherubic and playful. The lack of gender renders them asexual and so not threatening to the (likely) female owners of the coqueras. Overall, coquera imagery counters the prevailing colonial stereotypes of the forest as dangerous, full of deadly beasts and hostile natives.

Not only do coqueras depict non-threatening imagery, they summon communication and interaction on which intersubjective exchange relies on the senses of sight, touch, and smell. The flowing movement of the carved vegetal patterns conveys the vitality of the wood and, by extension, the coquera's maker. The forest's

vitality is also communicated through the box's tactility. The topography of the box's lid beckons to be touched; its elaborate silver clasp, surely protecting something precious or delicate—usually coca leaves, yerba mate, or candies—begs to be opened, exposing its contents to view. When fingers touch the top to open the coquera, the undulations of the carving suggest movement and vitality. On an olfactory level, the material itself exudes the forest's scent; palm wood is described as smelling floral, sweet, pleasant, and sunny. When the lid is opened, the earthy aromas of dried coca leaves and yerba mate, or the sweet smell of confections, would mix with the palm's agreeable scent, adding to the coquera's sumptuous sensory experience. There is nothing unpleasant in the encounter with the coquera, nothing hints at the imagined danger that was all too often associated with Amazonia in the colonial world. All is lovely, delicate, and—importantly—civilized.

Coqueras are powerful advocates for Amazonia. Although its subjectivity, communicated through its appeal to the human sensorium, might not be perceived by its non-Amazonian owner, from a forest perspective the lovely little box has brought the living forest into the homes of those far from its place of origin. Although person-to-person friendships are made impossible by great distances and linguistic and cultural barriers, the ambassadorial coqueras extended the hand of sociability, thereby undermining the denigrating colonial-period discourses concerning Amazonia and its inhabitants.

3 | 5 CONCLUSION

I began this chapter with wood because it is through wood that we can most clearly sense Amazonian perspectives and relationalities. Although Amazonian attitudes towards the Inkas and their colonial others can never fully be realized, studying trees and subject-objects, such as keros and coqueras that are derived from trees, as participants in forest community, can lead to fuller understandings of the ways Amazonians responded to those from outside the forest with whom, whether by choice or circumstance, they interacted.

For Amazonians, the wood as a kero in Inka dress signified the transformation of Inkas into “friends,” rather than signaling the forest’s submission, as the Inkas would have seen it (see Chapter One). The act of making friends reveals Amazonian attitudes that the Inkas, although different from Amazonians, were another culture that existed within or could be bound into the Amazonian cosmological nexus. By understanding cosmic relationality, we see the chonta-kero-person as one manifestation of the Amazonian community of selves. Once others were drawn into mutual relationships, they could be understood as always having been in the relational network of Amazonian alterity. This idea will be pursued in the following chapter.

The transformation of Amazonian hardwoods into ornate luxury coqueras speaks to broader Amazonian cultural relations in the colonial era. The coquera’s passage of hands through trade is a sensory journey. Amazonians utilized the human sensorium to make others into friends through the trade and to counter prevailing and negative ideas about the forest and its peoples. Both keros and coqueras offer possible

ways of understanding the forest perspective when dealing with outsiders. As we shall see in Chapter Four, Amazonian efforts to transform what is alien and potentially dangerous into what is familiar and cooperative continues today, including in the bustling tourist market of Iquitos, Peru.



Figure 4.1. Shipibo artist unknown, Kené, cotton fiber and natural dye, 121 x 91 cm. Photo by the author.

CHAPTER 4 | KENÉ

PATHWAYS FOR THE FOREST

4 | 1 INTRODUCTION

I write as I sit on a Shipibo textile that I bought in Iquitos from a man on the banks of the Amazon River across from the Fitzcarraldo café. The textile is soft and worn, though a bit of stiffness lingers in the creases from multiple foldings. The cloth is rectangular with a dark brown border that barely contains my cross-legged frame. Sunlight absorbs into the fabric and enriches its ayahuasca stained coloring,

deepening the contrast of the tiny dark black lines that cover the surface of the cotton. I take a closer look, meditating on these lines that ebb and flow over the surface like the patterns of a moving anaconda's body. These patterns are known as *kené* and are imbued with song and life energy.²²⁴ In my textile they appear symmetrical with a dominant and reoccurring cross pattern repeating in several registers, but in other Shipibo textiles they take many other forms. There is no correct way to orient this particular textile except for the fact that the *kené* is painted on one side only, defining a "right" side. I think about the different ways I can look at this textile: as a traditional skirt, or *chitonte*, made to accommodate the curves of a woman's body; as a wall hanging; a table cover; or, as I am using it, a throw on which to sit.

I graze the cotton cloth with my finger. It looks and feels like machine-made canvas, imported as many Shipibo textiles now are. The mildly frayed edges signal that it was cut from a larger piece of cloth and its tight warp and weft are now separating due to the absence of serge stitching. The vendor, from whom I bought it, insisted that it was dyed with *ayahuasca*, a plant-based psychedelic around which an entire tourist industry is based. Likely he made this claim to increase the cloth's value on the assumption that, like so many other North Americans, I had ventured to Iquitos to experience the "magical brew" for myself. I look at this "ayahuasca" saturated cloth and realize that the dye has become sun-bleached and worn by my many sitting sessions on warm Santa Cruz days. The *kené* is applied to the canvas in both thin and

²²⁴ The plural of *kené* is *kenébo*, but here *kené* will be used to refer to both the singular and the plural. In general, I use traditional spellings for Shipibo terms.

thick lines of black paint. My eyes engage with the pattern's predictable rhythm, but then they are tricked by sudden gaps of paint, like a dropped syllable in a word. While each curve and line echo and play off one another, there are spaces left blank and silent. Sometimes the paint runs dry and I can see where the artist refreshed her brush to continue the curve a millimeter later.²²⁵

As I mull over the cloth, I think about how strange it is to be sitting on a souvenir from the Amazon, a place so different from Santa Cruz, California. As a White Californian woman who bought this textile, made for gringo consumption, I think about what it means to me. Since returning from Peru, I have taken this textile with me everywhere over the past three years. It bore witness to the wildcat strike at the base of University of California Santa Cruz in 2019. It draped the coffee table in my house when the Shelter in Place was ordered due to COVID-19 and it observed months of my isolation. When I was too stressed to write my dissertation, I even tried hiding it in a cabinet for months. Today, sitting on this textile, finally attempting to describe its appearance, I realize that I have come to view the woven threads with painted patterns as a subject-object, as an artifact that carries the essence, the *kamay*, of the forest, its maker, and now me as well. I regard it fondly, but thinking about Amazonian strategies for dealing with those from outside the forest, I now wonder, who did the befriending? Was the vendor the active agent or was I? Or was it the

²²⁵ Shipibo textiles are almost always produced by women. The production and commercialization of Shipibo fabric will be discussed below.

kené that drew me in, enchanting me, and making me its friend (see Chapter Three for a discussion of the Amazonian concept of “friend-making”)?

For the tourist, typically a Euro-American visitor like me, Shipibo textiles are the ultimate Indigenous Amazonian product—a perfect object to bring home from vacation or order online to represent the psychotropic and metaphysical “magic” of the exotic forest. Painted and embroidered textiles are a principal Shipibo export due to the fact that they are associated with the psychotropic dreams of ayahuasca, a plant brew which I will discuss in detail below.²²⁶ The suggestion that ayahuasca “magic” is used in the production of these textiles is crucial to their popularity. Because of the textiles’ touristic appeal, many Shipibo people travel from distant communities to the “ayahuasca mecca” of Iquitos to take advantage of its increased economic opportunities.²²⁷ Textiles with ayahuasca references not only populate the markets of Iquitos, but are sold directly by Shipibo artists in the tourist destinations of Pucallpa and Lima, and through secondary markets online.²²⁸

²²⁶ The brew is made from the caapi vine (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) and the chakruna shrub (*Psychotria viridis*) which contain the psychoactive chemical dimethyl tryptamine, or DMT, to which ayahuasca’s hallucinogenic effects are attributed. Most ayahuasca is grown in Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and Hawai’i, although there are so-called “analog” ayahuasca plants being grown in Central and Northern California. Although they have distinct meanings, because of popular conflation, I will use ayahuasca and caapi vine interchangeably.

²²⁷ Beatriz Caiuby Labate et al., “Notes on the Expansion and Reinvention of Ayahuasca Shamanism,” in *Ayahuasca Shamanism in the Amazon and Beyond*, ed. Beatriz Caiuby Labate and Clancy Cavnar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.

²²⁸ Historically, Shipibo communities reside in the Ucayali River area of the Peruvian lowlands with their cultural epicenter in Pucallpa. The Shipibo-Konibo, whom I conflate as *Shipibo*, are one of the larger Indigenous communities in the Amazon with 45,000 members throughout Peru.

The rise in ayahuasca tourism brought the Shipibo, and their visual culture, a new global visibility in terms of an online presence and appearances in film and international art exhibitions.²²⁹ With the increasing popularity of Shipibo culture in general, textiles with their unique kené designs, are now a highly sought-after commodity which yields enough income to offer Shipibo communities economic autonomy, but which also entangles them in the inherent inequities of global capitalism.²³⁰ Shipibo artists are now selling textiles and art online to survive the devastating impacts of COVID-19 and help preserve their culture.²³¹ Through all this, kené has meandered from the forest into worlds of ontological difference. In this chapter, I argue that kené, as agents of the forest in the form of textile art for sale to tourists, offer us an unexpected window into Shipibo sociality both within the forest and far beyond. Painted and embroidered kené can be understood as pathways for communication that fosters cultural exchanges with outsiders. In Shipibo thought, the selling of textiles with kené designs is not selling out. Rather, it is another turn in the process of “friend-making.”

²²⁹ Specific examples of film and exhibitions include, *Icaros: A Vision*, dir. by Leonor Caraballo and Matteo Norzi (Conibo Productions, 2016); *The Projective Drawing* exhibition featuring artist Sara Flores, curated by Brett Littman, the Shipibo Conibo Center, NYC, The Austrian Cultural Forum (Feb 6–March 13, 2018); and *Arts of Resistance: Politics and the Past in Latin America* exhibition, curated by Laura Osorio Sunnucks, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology (May 17–Sept 30, 2018).

²³⁰ Belaunde, “Una Biografía del *Chitonete*: Objeto Turístico y Vestimenta Shipibo-Konibo,” in *Por Donde Hay Soplo: Estudios Amazónicos en los Páises Andinos*, ed. Jean-Pierre Chaumeil et al. (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 2011), 465.

²³¹ Valeria Costa-Kostritsky, “Peruvian Artists Address the Covid Crisis in the Amazon,” *Apollo*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/peru-artists-amazon-covid-crisis/>.

In its emphasis on friend-making, this final chapter serves as a continuation of the discussion initiated in Chapter Three. By exploring the role of *kené* within contemporary cultural exchanges with Euro-American tourists and others, I hope to understand *kené* as a subject-object who speaks on behalf of the Shipibo and the Amazon, and to show how the “*kené* economy” is just a recent example of a deep history of cultural exchanges in which the forest perseveres by “friend-making.” To pivot away from the binary of self and other as discussed in Chapter Three, I will use the term “in-comers” instead of “Others” to refer to persons who come into Amazonia from outside locations, and who can come or go, and, with time, even become a friend.

Whereas this dissertation started with an examination of Inka thinking about the Amazon as a place to be invaded and reorganized, this concluding chapter considers the ways Amazonians and their subject-objects expand the forest domain not by military conquest, but by making friends. Historically, by extending a welcoming hand, they have disarmed potential foes and diminished the chances of dangerous encounters. But more than that, when the forest breathes, taking in toxins, the whole world lives; when the forests drinks, pulling in water vapor, the world in its entirety is refreshed. And so, in a very real way, the forest lines, as discussed in Chapter Three, now flow beyond the trees, delivering its life energy globally.

4 | 2 DESIGNS FELL FROM HER MOUTH AND INTO A SUITCASE

Tourists flock to Iquitos, Peru for the healing products of Indigenous knowledge. Iquitos is located in the northeastern corner of Peru in the Loreto region,

bordering Colombia and Brazil. It is the ninth largest city in Peru with a population of around 500,000 and an economy founded on the rubber trade, but now increasingly reliant on the fishing, timber, and, above all, tourist industries. Indigenous communities in this region consist of the Bora, Urarinas, Matses, Huitoto, Achuar, Yaguas, and Jebero and Shipibo.

In two hours of walking through Iquitos, tourists see the region's history as a palimpsest, while experiencing its present. They are also invited to create an Iquitos out of their own imagination. Gringos sip their tea in cafés that exhibit Amazonian pop art by local artists, wear shirts that say “Got ayahuasca?” along with parachute pants decorated with kené. In my first visit, I could not at first help but understand Iquitos as a fanciful shamanic retreat catering to foreign tourists on spiritual quests, and feeding those hungry for “magic” and wellbeing. I viewed it skeptically as a place where the touristic imagination is both exploited and marketed to by the Iquitos community.

Iquitos tourism is either promoted as the gateway to Amazonia for tourists interested in a Fitzcarraldo adventure or for people searching to find their “inner truth” through Amazonian wisdom. In the closing pages of *A Culture of Stone*, Dean concludes that “everything new is old again” in her analysis of the re-creation of the Inka's capital of Cusco and its dependence on New Age tourism in the competitive tourist economy.²³² The anthropologist Helaine Silverman speaks to “archaeological

²³² Dean, *Culture of Stone*, 157–58.

tourism” where the “past” is commodified for both political and economic ends.²³³ The colonial-Indigenous histories present in Iquitos lend themselves to New Age capitalist discourses around Indigenous knowledges. Ayahuasca tourism is just a growing part of this tradition, which is apparent in the marketing of kené to tourists.

Shipibo people have a long history of creating new artistic forms through cultural exchange (as discussed in Chapter Three) by taking what is new and incorporating it, or entangling it in forest lines. Before we can appreciate the current ways the Shipibo have re-created their cultural and artistic traditions in response to current touristic interests, we must first be acquainted with some critical Shipibo terms and their highly nuanced meanings. Living Shipibo artists who make kené tell us that, “it is a dynamic process of individual reinterpretation of their communities’ traditions of artistic expression through pattern and color” and Shipibo women indicate that they value independent creativity in textile decoration above all else.²³⁴ Although it is a traditional art form, kené is ever-changing and evolving.

While kené has been simply translated as “design,” it is much more than beautiful symmetrical patterns. Kené are the multisensorial and multimodal living designs that make up the universe; they can be embodied in embroidery, drawing, and painting and can be seen on ceramics, skin, and more recently in artworks like

²³³ Helaine Silverman, “Touring Ancient Times: The Present and Presented Past in Contemporary Peru,” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 883.

²³⁴ Clare Odland and Nancy Feldman, “Shipibo Textile Practices 1952–2010,” in *Textiles and Settlement: From Plains Space to Cyber Space; Proceedings of the Textile Society of America Biennial Symposium*, paper 42 (October 2010), 6.

paintings on canvas, wall murals, and digital art.²³⁵ They are part of a cosmovision that forms the crux of human and other-than-human Amerindian perspectivism.²³⁶ A contemporary Shipibo origin story, elucidates Amazonian cosmovision; it tells of Ronin, the cosmic anaconda, who sings the designs (kené) of her skin to create the universe. Shipibo *onaya* (shaman) Herlinda Agustín sings a version of that story:

In the beginning a gigantic anaconda lived in darkness,
Singing the designs of her back,
And the designs fell from her mouth to her songs.
The designs gathered together
And took form,
Creating the universe and the people²³⁷

This song teaches us that kené are part of Ronin and the source of all creation. The kené, as part of Ronin, participate in her subjecthood. From Agustín, we also learn

²³⁵ Belaunde, “*Kené: Shipibo-Conibo Design*,” trans. Sara Welsh Colaianni, in “The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context,” ed. Alaka Wali and J. Claire Odland, special issue, *Fieldiana. Anthropology* n.s., no. 45 (2016): 1. Traditionally kené were drawn on bodies as tattoos, painted on ceramics, and both painted and embroidered on textiles. Although kené are a part of several Western Amazonian cultures, I will focus on Shipibo kené due to their entanglement with the ayahuasca complex.

²³⁶ The term “Amerindian,” used by Viveiros de Castro and others, risks homogenizing the diverse Indigenous peoples of the Americas. I used it here to remain consistent with the current scholarship on Amazonia.

²³⁷ Belaunde, *Kené: Arte, Ciencia y Tradición en Diseño* (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 2009): 39. Translation by the author and Amanda M. Smith; see: Smith and Macheski, “Sensing Shipibo Aesthetics Beyond the Peruvian Amazon: Kené Design in *Icaros: A Vision* (2016),” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 32, no. 2 (2023): 337. See also Pilar Valenzuela and Agustín Valera, *Koshi Shinanya Ainbo: El Testimonio de una Mujer Shipiba* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2005). Although this contemporary story may resonate with the first lines of the Christian gospel of John (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”) and may reflect some degree of hybridity or syncretism, it nevertheless fully comports with Shipibo understandings of the centrality of Ronin to kené and to creation.

that the designs are not limited to the visual but extend into the aural, as songs or sound bodies known as *ícaros*. When intoned, *ícaros* communicate between, and connect, the individual persons composing the forest’s “ecology of selves” (see Chapters One and Three).

Throughout the Peruvian Amazon, *ícaros* refers specifically to “magical” songs or melodies that can be learned from sacred power plants. Some plants are identified as sacred and powerful because they have *ibo*, or spirit that constitutes the plant as its own being; the plant is a teacher (*doctore*) who can think and interact with others. Sacred power plants are known as *rao* (ráo) in Shipibo.²³⁸ Although *rao* is commonly translated as “medicinal plants,” it can extend to things other than plants and it is more than plant bodies. *Rao* can be plant energy, poison, animal parts like Ronin’s scales, or particular objects like charms that exert power and influence to repair or harm; it is through the *rao*’s sensorial effects, like smell, taste, and form, that these powers are manifest.²³⁹ The *kené* of Ronin’s back, which she sang into *ícaros*, carry with them the *rao* of Ronin and simultaneously the entire Shipibo universe, and all sacred power plants within it.

²³⁸ Power plants can play various roles, including modifying human behaviors and states of consciousness, improving hunting or fishing, inducing pregnancy, aiding in communication with non-humans, and providing protection from spirits. For more on *rao* see: Odland and Feldman, “Shipibo Textile Practices.”

²³⁹ Anne-Marie Colpron, “From Unknown to Hypermediatized—Shipibo-Konibo Female Shamans in Western Amazonia,” in *Cosmological Indigenous Cosmologies and Pragmatics*, ed. Françoise Dussart and Sylvie Poirier (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2021), 144.

In the case of *kené*, *rao* is generally medicine in the form of sacred power, often in the form of plants, that are extraordinary because of their “effects on the body or spirit.”²⁴⁰ Human healers often partake in a *dieta*, or a limitation of food, drug, and sex, to help establish the clear mind needed to either “seduce, domesticate, or dominate the plant spirit” in order to use its *rao*;²⁴¹ it is the *rao* that communicates its knowledges through and with what Shipibo call of *cano*, a term meaning pathway.²⁴² Belaunde likens *cano* to the veins of a plant leaf through which plant spirits flow.²⁴³ It is similar to Uzendoski’s concept of connecting lines, as discussed in Chapter Three. As lines or pathways, *cano* can take the form of *kené*, *ícaros* (songs), rivers, healers, and the cosmos itself.²⁴⁴

Agustín’s song draws on the concepts of *kené*, *ícaros*, *ibo*, *rao*, and *cano*. Ronin sings *ícaros* which animate the *kené* on and of her back. In a paper pertaining to *kené*’s subjectivity in the 2016 film *Icaros: A Vision*, Smith and Macheski observe the following:

[K]ené are simultaneously Ronin, whose skin contains all possible designs; the Shipibo concept of *cano* or “pathway” through which beings pass through the cosmos and the rivers; magical songs; and the spirits of *rao*. *Icaros* [the film] draws on all of these possibilities in its use of *kené*; they [kené] exceed a status as mere decorative patterns and objects to evoke their function within the Shipibo universe.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰Laura Dev, “Plants and Pathways: More-than-Human Worlds of Power, Knowledge, and Healing,” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2020), ix.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁴² Smith and Macheski, “Sensing Shipibo Aesthetics,” 337.

²⁴³ Belaunde, “*Kené: Shipibo-Conibo Design*,” 86.

²⁴⁴ Belaunde, *Kené: Arte, Ciencia y Tradición en Diseño*; see also Odland and Feldman, “Shipibo Textile Practices.”

²⁴⁵ Smith and Macheski, “Sensing Shipibo Aesthetics,” 337.

Kené are pathways for Ronin's creative power; they both flow from her and are her, participating in her creative force (ibo and rao).

As established in Chapter Three, the creation of stories and artifacts inherently involves a collaborative process between a human maker and the forest because human and forest are inseparable. Humans live in the forest, and the forest lives in them. When kené are painted or embroidered onto various surfaces, the living forest and Shipibo artist are said to co-create an object which, because it participates both in the forest's and the artist's subjecthood, is necessarily a subject-object, although, as explained in Chapter Three, the degree of subjectivity varies. As we shall see, co-authorship provides kené with a visible and material existence in ways that allow it to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, inviting in-comers to participate in forest sociality.

Before discussing the ways contemporary kené work with the forest and Shipibo peoples to respond to in-comers, we must first understand how kené changed during the colonial period. Prior to kené's popularity on textiles, kené were manifested in body tattoos or ceramic decoration. With the arrival of Spanish missionaries, kené migrated onto textiles that were worn to conform to Catholic notions of modesty. Not only did the media for kené expand to a variety of surfaces, but the geometric designs began to incorporate European motifs. Along with new motifs came new meanings. Crosses perhaps provide the most salient example. During the rubber boom (1880–1912 C.E.), Shipibo people fled the labor camps with many seeking refuge in Jesuit missions. One consequence of the close contact with

missionaries is that the shape of the Christian cross became incorporated into various designs; see, for example, the *espíritu del ojo (vero yoxin)* (Fig. 4.2). The integration of the cross shape into kené was no doubt facilitated by the fact that the Shipibo coming-of-age festival (Ani Xeati), which existed long before Christians entered Shipibo lands, utilized a wooden cross form as part of the ritual.²⁴⁶ Although the origins of the cross shape can be found in Shipibo visual culture, Christian meanings easily adjoined Indigenous ones, creating a composite or hybrid motif.

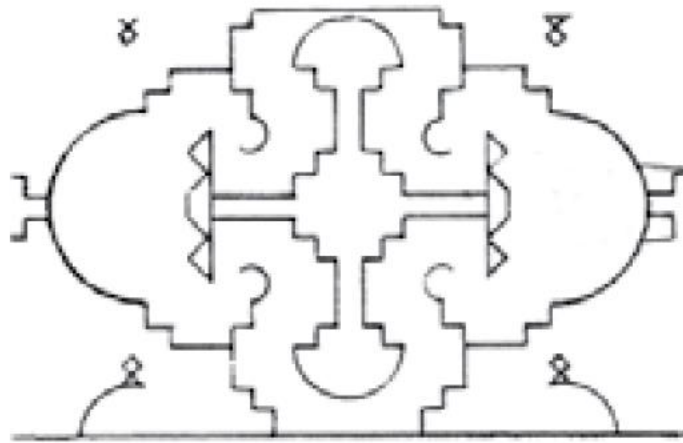


Figure 4.2. Luisa Elvira Belaunde, *Espíritu del ojo (vero yoxin)*. Image from: Belaunde, *Kené: Arte, ciencia y tradición en diseño* (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 2009), 27.

A *cushma*, or poncho, from the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology features a cross prominently as part of the kené (Fig. 4.3). The textile is created from handwoven cotton; mulberry tree bark was used to stained the fabric a light brown hue. Light pink, blue, dark brown, and green painted bands border the kené on both front and back panels. A cruciform dominates the *cushma* and would

²⁴⁶ Odland and Feldman, “Shipibo Textile Practices,” 6.

have covered the chest and back of the body when worn. Around the bold black crosses, thinner and lighter-toned lines snake through the empty spaces.



Figure 4.3. Shipibo Cushma (poncho) featuring the cross design, 1900-73, cotton fiber and dye, 109.2 x 109.9 cm., University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, cat. no. Se130, <http://collection-online.moa.ubc.ca/search/item?keywords=shipibo+cushma&row=0>.

Cross-shaped motifs may be rigid, as they are in the cushma in the UBC Museum, but they may also be more curvilinear, as seen in the contemporary textile seen at the outset of this chapter (Fig. 4.1).²⁴⁷ When worn, the cushma envelops the body lending it both the protective powers of the Christian god and pre-Christian Shipibo traditions. One way to see the cross is as the sensuous skin of Ronin who has swallowed the Christian motif as a part of her design. The incorporation of the

²⁴⁷ Several scholars have described in detail different types of kené and their meanings. See, for example, Belaunde, “Kené: Shipibo-Conibo Design”; Feldman, “Shipibo-Conibo Textiles 2010–2018: Artists of the Amazon Culturally Engaged,” in *The Social Fabric: Deep Local to Pan Global; Proceedings of the Textile Society of America 16th Biennial Symposium* (Vancouver, September 2018), <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2080&context=tsaconf>; and Angelika Gebhart-Sayer, “Una Terapia Estética: Los Diseños Visionarios del Ayahuasca entre los Shipibo-Conibo,” *America Indígena* 46, no. 1 (January–March 1986): 146–75.

Christian cross into *kené* reminds us of the ways snakes eat their prey, taking what is whole outside their bodies, and absorbing it inside their digestive track, which a kind of pathway (*cano*). With its layered meanings, the cruciform *kené* provides the wearer with protection amplified by allusions to both Christian and Shipibo belief systems.²⁴⁸

Obviously, the use of *kené* and its forms have changed over time. The example of the cross is just one of many that could be cited. The most noticeable of contemporary changes has to do with the prominence of *ayahuasca* motifs. In fact, *kené* is now one of the most recognizable signifiers of what the environmental scientist Laura Dev dubs the “*ayahuasca* complex” to identify the multiple social dynamics involved in the drug’s circulation.²⁴⁹ She describes the complex as “an assemblage of socio-relational natural beings, more-than-human relations, and interspecies and Indigenous practices that produce *ayahuasca* as a global commodity.”²⁵⁰

Kené appear throughout the *ayahuasca* complex as a part of what we might call an *ayahuasca* aesthetic, in which *kené* textiles cover the walls, floors, and tables of *ayahuasca* retreats. Healers and visitors alike also wear *kené* textiles in these settings (Fig. 4.4). As active participants in this complex, tourists buy *kené* in the form of tourist art, packing the skin of *Ronin* into their suitcases for transport to

²⁴⁸ Belaunde, “*Kené*: Shipibo-Conibo Design,” 82.

²⁴⁹ Dev, “Plants and Pathways.” The global popularity of *kené* is directly tied *ayahuasca* tourism, see Bernd Brabec de Mori and Laida Mori Silvano de Brabec, “La Corona de la Inspiración. Los Diseños Geométricos de los Shipibo-Konibo y sus Relaciones con Cosmovisión y Música,” *Indiana* 26 (2009): 105–34.

²⁵⁰ Dev, “Plants and Pathways,” 1.

locations far and wide, and, in so doing (mostly without any awareness), extending the reach of Ronin’s back and her creative energies.



Figure 4.4. Screenshot, Temple of the Way of Light, *Maestro Diogenes Singing an Ikaró*, filmed in Iquitos, Peru, video, 2:37, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0lgQw1X3hs>.

Here I am not so much interested in the tourists’ perspective, what they think of the ayahuasca experience or of the forest more generally. Rather, I hope to understand the ayahuasca complex from a forest perspective, which is to see a continuity in response to in-comers. Consistently, the forest, which includes all its persons, seeks to meet what is foreign and possibly dangerous, and transform it into a “friend.” Historically, this has not always worked, nor has it protected the forest from great harm. Nevertheless friend-making still expresses forest ontology, which is to see all persons, as broadly defined, as intertwined and interdependent.

In the case of living Shipibo artists and those who engage in-comers most closely, kené’s sacredness is not “polluted” by the incorporation of ayahuasca

imagery any more than it was polluted by crosses. As will be discussed below, change does not dilute the significance nor the power of kené and what it brings into—or makes present—in the world. In 2008, in order to access funding to diversify the emergent kené economy, the Shipibo artists collective known as Barin Babado (children of the sun) successfully petitioned to designate kené as intangible cultural patrimony under the UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Culture.²⁵¹ Concurrently, Lima-based Shipibo artists have gained access to metropolitan gallery spaces and prestigious international art exhibits around the world, with artists such as Olinda Silvano, Elena Varela, Roldán Pinedo, and Harry Pinedo making names for themselves in the contemporary art world.²⁵² With the growing popularity of kené, new kené aesthetics are emerging as pathways that extend Amazonian relationality far beyond the forest, “friend-making” as they go.

4 | 3 KENÉ AS PATHWAYS TO FRIEND-MAKING

The textiles I saw on the boulevard of Iquitos in 2018 were very different from the styles that were popular twenty years earlier. These new textiles are mostly linked to ayahuasca tourism; they include figurative images like snakes, ayahuasca vines, and ayahuasca visions as opposed to the aniconic (non-imagistic) lines and

²⁵¹ Belaunde, “Diseños Materiales e Inmateriales: La Patrimonialización del Kené Shipibo-Konibo y de la Ayahuasca en el Perú,” *Mundo Amazónico* 3 (2012): 127.

²⁵² Recent international exhibitions featuring Shipibo art include: *Amazonías*, ARCO Madrid, Madrid, Spain (February 23–May 5, 2019); *Arts of Resistance: Politics and the Past in Latin America*, Museum of Anthropology, the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia (May 17–September 30, 2018); and *The Projective Drawing*, The Austrian Cultural Forum, New York City, New York (February 6–May 13, 2018).

figures of earlier decades. Instead of kené on handspun cotton tinted with natural dyes, the currently flourishing style of Shipibo textiles reflects the contemporary aesthetic of the ayahuasca complex including imported materials and the day-glow colors associated with “drug art” and the hallucinatory experience. We might write-off these changes as money-driven appeals to consumer interests, but history suggests that the Shipibo responses are consistent with their history of incorporating the foreign and re-creating it through friend-making. Because of touristic interest in ayahuasca and an iconocentrism that expresses itself in a preference for figural imagery over the abstraction of kené, ayahuasca imagery has been added to textiles. In a sense, then, the textiles reach out to tourists in friendly and accommodating gestures. But the kené are still there, even if they are regarded by most in-comers as “mere decoration.” The Shipibo artists think with the forest to co-create new Shipibo visuals for themselves, the forest, tourists, and the art world.

Kené textiles have been sold to in-comers ever since anthropologists started collecting them in the mid-twentieth century. Those that look more “traditional” (geometric patterns, natural dyes and fibers) are preferred by anthropological museums which typically ignore modern textiles with their bright colors and figural imagery.²⁵³ The latter serve as private souvenirs or are displayed in contemporary art exhibitions.

²⁵³ I confess that, like early anthropologists, the tones of natural colors appeal to me; accordingly, I also purchased a more subdued kené textile (Fig. 4.1).

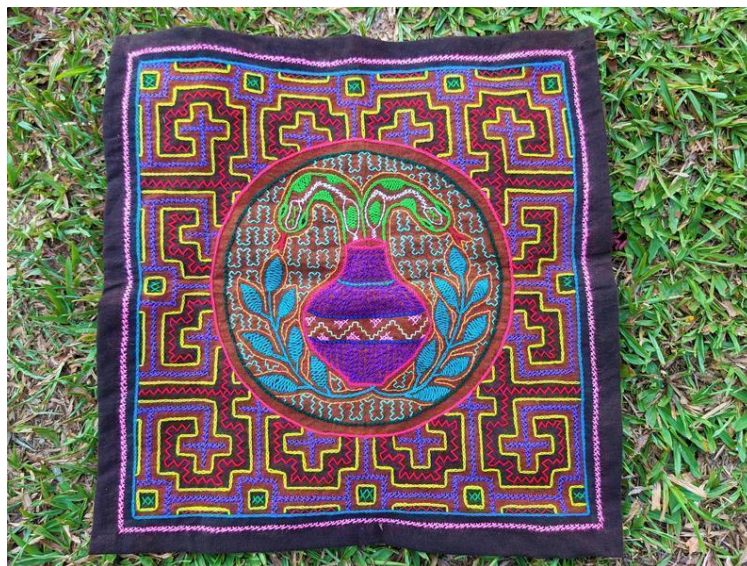


Figure 4.5. Unnamed Shipibo artist, “Shipibo textile,” Casa de Ayahuasca Etsy shop, 38.5 x 37 cm., [Etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com/).

A representative example of contemporary Shipibo textiles—including the global marketing by means of middlemen who mediate between artists and consumers—is found on the e-commerce site Etsy, where it is marketed by the Casa de Ayahuasca, a shop based in Tel Aviv, Israel; it is offered for \$50.00 and its suggested functions include tablecloth, patch, or wall art (Fig. 4.5). The entire textile is embroidered in a lively array of colors on machine-made cotton fabric of black and brown. The primary subject of the textile is ayahuasca. In the center there is an embroidered purple pot or jar, presumably for serving the ayahuasca brew, with two bright blue caapi vines (the DMT component of ayahuasca) growing from its base. Two snakes, recalling Ronin, the cosmic serpent, emerge from the jar. They have dayglow green patterning and their electric red, curling tongues extend to kiss the top of each ayahuasca vine.

The entire central design is (nearly) bilaterally symmetrical across a vertical axis and contained in an embroidered circle. The negative space within is filled with baby blue kené that moves up and down in a rectilinear fashion. The kené within the circle repeat in horizontal registers; they look stamped or regularized in their reiteration. Beyond the encircled subject, the remainder of the textile has a larger kené pattern that is symmetrical, geometric, and embroidered in hot pink, yellow, purple, and green. The entire piece is then bordered by a light pink cross-stitch on a black cloth which makes the patterns stand out, the consequence of which is that viewers do not have to look as closely as one does with textiles decorated in more subtle hues (e.g., Fig. 4.1 and 4.3). We might say that it is a “friendlier” textile than those lacking figural images and patterns rendered in easy-to-see colors.



Figure 4.6 Either Olinda Silvano or Silvia Ricopa, kené textile with Ronin, caapi vines, and an ayahuasca flower motif, The Museum of Anthropology gift shop, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, dimensions unknown, <https://moa.ubc.ca/2018/09/a-closer-look-at-kené-design-in-arts-of-resistance/>.

A second example of contemporary kené textile work was for sale at the gift shop of the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology (MOA) for \$1,500 Canadian dollars (Fig. 4.6). It was sold in conjunction with a 2018 exhibition entitled *Arts of Resistance: Politics and the Past in Latin America*. The exhibition itself featured a mural by Shipibo artists Silvia Ricopa and Olinda Silvano. Although the MOA shop does not offer the name of the textile artist(s) or its dimensions, the amount of embroidered detail suggests that this is a large piece of cloth. The design is (mostly) bilaterally symmetrical across two axes and consists of electric greens, yellows, blues, whites, and reds throughout. The central motif is an ayahuasca vine flower with additional floral aspects stitched within its four large heart-shaped petals. The flower is contained in concentric red, white, yellow, and blue cross-stitched circles. A thick black and red anaconda in the form of an ouroboros surrounds the circles and central flower. Another decorative circle contains the snake, and the textile is filled with four ayahuasca vines meandering on each side. The piece is bordered by large kené in vibrant greens, pinks, and yellows.

As in Figure 4.5, the subject matter of Figure 4.6 can be perceived readily as ayahuasca; for those needing interpretive assistance, the website states, "This textile's designs are drawn from the practice of ayahuasca healing rituals which bring on a visionary state thought to reveal expressive patterns that embody powerful

energies.”²⁵⁴ Contemporary textiles, like those illustrated here, are more “communicative” to non-Amazonians than were textiles of earlier periods. Traditional *kené*, with their geometric designs in monotonous and subtle hues, are harder to “read” by those who are used to understanding decoration as lacking in meaning. Earlier textiles feature *kené* that embody the plant spirit itself and have few or no references to things in the so-called “real” world—which is to say the world as optically perceived by the waking human eye—and so are “unreadable” by non-Amazonians. In response to the influx of new “eyes,” Shipibo artists and the forest of which they are a part co-created a new aesthetic tradition in order to communicate meaning across cultural differences.

To account for the pairing of ayahuasca imagery with *kené* in textiles, a broader understanding of ayahuasca’s relationship to *kené* is needed. As indicated in Agustín’s song recounted above, all *kené* designs come from the skin of the cosmic anaconda, Ronin, where “each mark on her skin can open itself and reveal other designs.”²⁵⁵ Belaunde explains that “the twisted rope of the ayahuasca [vine] is explicitly identified with the cosmic anaconda, Ronin, the primordial being, ‘mother’ of ayahuasca and of the waters, the original aquatic source of all existing designs, in the past, present, and future.”²⁵⁶ Partnering ayahuasca vines or flowers with snakes is an iconic way of visualizing the presence of the plant spirits within the *kené*. The

²⁵⁴ Hailey Mah, “A Closer Look at *Kené* Designs in Arts of Resistance,” Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia (Sept. 13, 2008), <https://moa.ubc.ca/2018/09/a-closer-look-at-kene-design-in-arts-of-resistance/>.

²⁵⁵ Belaunde, “*Kené*: Shipibo-Conibo Design,” 84.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 28; trans. by the author.

mixture of styles helps communicate kené's meaning to non-Amazonian consumers on the global art market, which is, although called "global," profoundly Western in its priorities and preferences. Additionally, the inclusion of bright colors, as opposed to natural dyes, resonates with ayahuasca hallucinations and, arguably, can be said to "illustrate" visions and so recount visionary messages.

To some, kené might seem to do nothing more than provide an abstract background for the images of snakes and flowers, but in Shipibo visuality kené functions as *cano* for the *rao*, while also participating in Ronin's subjecthood, whose markings are the origins of all things. In sum, kené is a subject-object that/who defies traditional Western taxonomies and aesthetics; it both visualizes and opens pathways of communication across the boundaries of cultural difference. These pathways, or *cano*, are integral to social relationships that exist not just within the forest and its community, the human and other-than-human, but between worlds.

The art historian Nancy Gardner Feldman finds that kené "marks the symbiosis of Shipibo-Conibo peoples, plants, vines—as it represents the sap or energy of the forests flowing within man's veins and marks the path of the ever flowing and evolving Amazon river and its many tributaries."²⁵⁷ While the pathways of kené extend *beyond* the forest they are always *of* the forest. Duchesne-Winter argues that there are different ways in which plants connect to other persons; discerning these connections requires that we *think with plants*; plants, he observes,

²⁵⁷ Feldman, "Shipibo-Conibo Textiles."

use multiple languages to communicate antagonistic or mutual relations through electric, chemical, or visual cues.²⁵⁸

Shipibo thinking with plants can be seen in *kené*, which function to visualize plant spirits. Some Shipibo women are born able to see and/or hear the pathways that *kené* designate. Those who cannot see the pathways and so create *kené* or sing *ícaros*, apply *piripiri*, a reed plant that is said to have grown from the ashes of Ronin, in their eyes and navels during adolescence in order to acquire the abilities that others are born with.²⁵⁹ Men, desiring to see or hear the pathways, either follow a *dieta*, or seek the aid of *ayahuasca* to sense the *cano* through which *rao* traverses the world.²⁶⁰ While both genders can see the pathways, the making of *kené* is gendered female.²⁶¹

Related to the idea of thinking with plants, is *listening* to plants. When Shipibo artists are asked about their *kené* designs, they typically follow the line of *kené* with their fingers and sing an *ícaro*, changing notes as their fingers trace the

²⁵⁸ Duchesne-Winter, *Plant Theory*, 28. On “thinking with plants,” see the seminal work of Anna Tsing, “More-than-Human Sociality: A Call for Critical Description,” in *Anthropology and Nature*, ed. Kirsten Hastrup, 37–52 (New York: Routledge, 2014).

²⁵⁹ Belaunde, “*Kené*: Shipibo-Conibo Design,” 82.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 19; plants like *ayahuasca* are considered teachers and called *doctores* in Shipibo.

²⁶¹ Brabec de Mori and Mori Silvano de Brabec insist that Shipibo men historically made *kené*, arguing that the association of *kené* with women did not emerge until the second half of the twentieth century. Regardless, making *kené* now constitutes a gendered practice dominated by women. See, Brabec de Mori and Mori Silvano de Brabec, “La Corona de la Inspiración.” However, with the rise in popularity of Shipibo art, men, like Harry Pinedo, are now painting and making *kené* for a global audience.

curves of the kené.²⁶² By thinking with and listening to plants, human persons can open lines of communication not only with particular plant species, but with the forest as a whole. Moreover, to communicate with the forest is to link to all forest persons. Shipibo artist Chonon Benxo, describes the process of co-creating kené by thinking with plants:

Traditionally, in order to make kené designs we gather and process the roots of a sacred plant. Taking the plant enhances our imaginations, giving ideas of how to use kené can represent the elements of our lives [sic]. The plant helps us answer creative questions, like: How should I plan the design? What pattern will fit best? What will look most beautiful? Over time we have developed distinct kené patterns made more beautiful by the way the plant guides our thoughts. We use natural dyes to paint kené and embroider kené by hand to recreate our cosmology and environment through our art.... These sacred plants lead to many creative thoughts and designs and this is the origin of kené!²⁶³

Benxo stresses that it is through working (co-creating) with power plants like ayahuasca that artists design the most beautiful kené. What's more, the kené recreates—makes visible—Shipibo cosmology as a community of persons, which is to say of humans, other-than-human animals, plants, and all things in the environment. Producing kené exemplifies sociality among persons as broadly defined.

Kené themselves communicate through their aesthetic properties or *kikin* (*quinquin*), a concept that refers to beauty present in the visual, olfactory, and aural

²⁶² Olinda Silvano, *Reshinjabe/Olinda Silvano: Kené Is a Song*, filmed May 1, 2017 in Cantagallo, Lima, Peru, video, 1:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qCDcx5dtfg>.

²⁶³ Kene Rao Producciones, *Introduction to the Traditional Shipibo Art of Kené*, filmed at Fundación Kene Rao, Pucallpa, Peru, video, 1:44, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eprc3cCdFOc>.

senses of a thing.²⁶⁴ Uzendoski and Edith Felicia Calapucha-Tapuy’s thinking about what they term “somatic poetry” with regard to aural arts parallels kené; they define “somatic poetry” as follows:

Somatic poetry involves the creative use of words and music and also plants, animals, and the landscape—entities recognized as having subjectivity and creative powers, powers that are internal rather than external to the art. Somatic poetry is the poetry of place and experience, an art that recognizes and builds upon the expressiveness of ecology and ecological interrelations.²⁶⁵

Like somatic poetry, kené is multisensorial. Moreover, because of their somatic appeal, kené invariably challenge the objectifying tendencies of the global capitalist art market.²⁶⁶ Their complexity and the clear investment of labor—what Gell called the “technology of enchantment”—prompts consumers to wonder about the significance of the lines that thread not only through a single work but that link any individual work to many, many others, marking them all as Shipibo.²⁶⁷ Thinking about those lines is an initial step in thinking with kené, which is to think with the Shipibo, and with the forest. In this way kené function as a hand extended in friendship while also pulling non-Amazonians into the forest world, a world in which “art” may be a beautiful object, but is also a subject.

4 | 4 AN UNRULY EXISTANCE

²⁶⁴ Gebhart-Sayer, “Una Terapia Estética, 195.

²⁶⁵ Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy, *The Ecology of the Spoken Word: Amazonian Storytelling and Shamanism Among the Napo Runa* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 23.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁶⁷ Gell, *Art and Agency*, 74.

Because *kené* textiles are collaboratively produced by Shipibo human artists, plant persons, and the forest as a whole, they occupy, create, and maintain interconnected worlds, while sustaining Shipibo identity. We can understand the interconnections by recognizing their fractality; in the words of ethnographer Lagrou, these are worlds “where every unity is dual and every duality is a movement in-between.”²⁶⁸ Lagrou builds on the idea of fractal relations as presented by the anthropologist Roy Wagner, who finds that in relationships characterized by fractality, a subject is inherently “neither singular nor plural.”²⁶⁹ Wagner relies on the concept of genealogy, where subjects are gestating, or engendering others resulting in integral relationships, where each subject in the chain of lineage is neither an individual nor part of a group, but instead exists as a fractal, rather than a quantitative, unit.²⁷⁰ In their sprawling paths of both repeated and not repeating, elements, *kené* express the eloquent fractality of inextricably interconnected worlds.

²⁶⁸ Lagrou, “Learning to See,” 31.

²⁶⁹ Wagner, “The Fractal Person,” 166.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Lagrou maintains that Amazonian fractal relations are a process of always becoming that includes the other-than-human and differs from Wagner’s writing on Melanesia, where fractal relations are more genealogical.



Figure 4.7. Pekon Rabi, *chitonte* (skirt), 2020, handspun cotton, natural dyes, paint, and embroidery, dimensions unknown, <https://www.xapiri.com/shop/traditional-shipibo-chitonti-textile-04>.

Kené lines undulate and, when painted, bleed into the handspun and organic material (Fig. 4.7). Their melodic curves create a geometric screen that covers the body with the vitality of the rao that both flows through, and is, the kené. The rhythmic dance of kené creates a sensuous existence. Lagrou writes about similar patterns, which she calls “song lines” in the *xantima* of the Huni Kuin peoples of the Western Amazon. She argues for a “fractal approach to the intricate implication of relations as revealed by form.”²⁷¹ By this, Lagrou indicates that the symmetrical and asymmetrical characteristics of the song lines, which aurally parallel the visual kené, reveal a constant inversion of perspectives; she observes that there is a “dualism in permanent disequilibrium, ...an infinite spinning between macro- and micro-cosmos.”²⁷² In her discussion of “dualism in permanent disequilibrium,” Lagrou

²⁷¹ Ibid., 36.

²⁷² Ibid.

provides the example of the predator/prey relationship in which a predator in one situation, might be the prey in another. Perspectives are always changing, shifting, transforming; no perspective is fixed and permanent.

The instability of perspectives is expressed in the net-like designs of *kené*.²⁷³ *Kené* first seem symmetrical and rigidly patterned, but closer observation reveals small interior curves, asymmetrically placed. These asymmetries cause the traveling eye to hesitate; the sudden stoppage in the pattern traps the eye in each gap it creates. Some *kené* play with perception as they seem to vanish, or when what seems to be the background turns into the foreground. Lagrou suggests that these perspectival shifts expose the interconnectedness between human beings and between humans and non-humans as well.²⁷⁴ By prompting, if not compelling changes in perspective, *kené* invites viewers to see the world as the Shipibo see it, to enter the forest, engage with its many persons and recognize their own relationality.

Interconnectedness is as much it is about exchange with other-than-humans, as it is about “befriending” the foreign. By befriending I mean a reaching out to non-Amazonians in recognition of the interrelatedness of all persons. Amazonian perspectival ontology (discussed in the Introduction and in Chapter Three) challenges Euro-American concepts of alterity through its systematic reversal of perspectives. In Amazonia, the act of “making others” is troubled by shifting perspectives that ask

²⁷³ Lagrou, “Copernicus in the Amazon: Ontological Turnings from the Perspective of the Amerindian Ethnologies,” *Sociología e Antropología* 8, no. 1 (January–April 2018): 152.

²⁷⁴ Lagrou, “Learning to See,” 40.

persons (human and otherwise) to respond to unknown others by making friends and so “de-othering” them. Santos-Granero posits that, because of their relational ontology, Amazonian communities act to familiarize the foreign, to incorporate what is different; in so doing, Amazonians are able to adapt to change collectively while still maintaining their cultural cohesion.²⁷⁵

I posit that *kené* can be understood as a visualization of Amazonian adaptability and the changes in *kené* design over time serve as visual documentation. We can understand the modern-day tourist as just another in a long line of in-comers to the Amazon. The changes in *kené* textiles are an example of the ways the Shipibo have historically engaged with what is unfamiliar, integrating what is new and foreign into forest relationality, which is to say, making it “friend.”²⁷⁶ The process of making an in-comer into a friend can be understood as a part of what has been described as “cosmological openness” where what is foreign is folded into constructions of the forest self.²⁷⁷ This cosmological openness involves collaborations between all Amazonian persons and in-comers and has done so since before the time of the Inkas. Moreover, collaboration and openness enable forest persons to continuously traverse cultural, linguistic, and other boundaries in a process that anthropologist Aparecida

²⁷⁵ Santos-Granero, *Vital Enemies: Slavery, Predation, and the Amerindian Political Economy of Life* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 226; see also Lagrou, “Learning to See,” 27.

²⁷⁶ Unfortunately, “friendship” is not always reciprocated. As a well-known example, *maestra* Olivia Arévalo was murdered by Canadian tourist, Paul Woodroffe, in 2018 over financial issues.

²⁷⁷ Allen Abramson and Martin Holbraad, *Framing Cosmologies: The Anthropology of Worlds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 15.

Vilaça calls “other-self-becoming,” which describes the perspectival shifts inherent in friend-making.²⁷⁸

Cosmological openness is implicit in Shipibo kené origin stories, one of which relates how particular kené designs were the gift of an Inka woman.²⁷⁹ A Shipibo boy saw a strange woman standing on the opposite riverbank where the sand was burning. He built a bridge of tree trunks to rescue her, and got to her without himself being scorched. Unfortunately, she was already deceased. Amazed by her garments, he took her body back to the village. Shipibo people, as well as Konibo, Hauria Pana, and Piro all came to look at the dead Inka’s beautiful layered skirts. Each skirt had specific kené designs, which the various forest groups distributed among themselves: the Shipibo received the cross design; the Konibo were given the curved designs; the Hauri Pano gained the leaf design; and the Piro acquired a design of broken lines.²⁸⁰ One of many implications of this story, is that the Inkas are part of a forest story. In contrast to both Inka histories and those of the West derived from Inka perspectives, the Inkas did not come to the Amazon as conquerors in search of forest resources to extract. Rather, the encounter between Inka and forest brings gifts to the forest and so is integrated as “friend.” In “friendship” neither is *obliged* to reciprocate, as are those

²⁷⁸ For an extensive discussion on “other-self-becoming” see Aparecida Vilaça, *Strange Enemies: Indigenous Agency and Scenes of Encounters in Amazonia*, trans. David Rogers (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). See also Lagrou, “Copernicus,” 136.

²⁷⁹ Belaunde, “Kené: Shipibo-Conibo Design,” 83.

²⁸⁰ Belaunde associates the cruciform design referred to in the story with the wooden cross (*anishaeti*) used in the female gender initiation ceremony and in mediations between life and death; other scholars attribute the cross design to the influence of Christian missionaries (Ibid.).

bound by rules for consanguinity and affinity. Instead, friendship is a choice. It is a way of responding to alterity that purposefully searches out the benefits of relationships with in-comers. Stories like this demonstrate that everything that comes into the Shipibo world has the capacity to be part of the Shipibo world. Beyond that, once something is part of the Shipibo world, there is a perspectival shift that recognizes the new as having *always* been part of forest cosmology. We can see the lines of relationality (cano, to the Shipibo), the lines of kené, reaching out to incorporate the novel and the different, into a cosmology that seeks out alterity in order to “befriend” it, which is to recognize its belonging, while also integrating it.

4 | 5 CONCLUSION

With the growth of ayahuasca tourism, kené have become popular souvenirs for tourists, or in-comers, in the form of painted or embroidered textiles intended for a variety of usages. Kené has also garnered attention from the global art market in the form of paintings (including wall murals) and ceramics. Kené, once only geometric in design now integrates figural imagery, creating a new Shipibo aesthetic that is readily recognizable across international borders. In this chapter I have argued that kené are multisensory pathways that trace the collaborative efforts of Shipibo artists and the forest as a whole to re-make what is “other” into “friend.”

Understanding how Shipibo artists together with the forest create kené, requires us to make a perspectival shift. In turn, that shift compels us to re-think traditional ways of framing Amazonian-Other relationships in which forest peoples are seen one-dimensionally as victims. I do not argue that Amazonians have not been

victimized in their encounters with others. Rather, it is the unidimensionality of traditional histories that trap forest persons in a discourse of victimization, as always acted on, which perpetuates the objectification of Amazonians, humans and otherwise.

Amazonian histories suggest that the perception of difference is an integral part of Shipibo identity, but that alterity need not be a barrier to communication. Rather *kené*, in its pathways, integrates the in-comer as “friend,” which is a centuries-old and respected category of persons. The transformation from new and unknown into something familiar, is a process of recognition in which the alien becomes always, already part of the Shipibo world. In terms of Shipibo visual culture, we observe that the lyrical twists and turns of *kené* offer ways to understand past, present, and future social relationships both within the forest and beyond.

Although coloniality is embedded in the foreign consumption of *kené* textiles and expressed in the tourist economy, the in-comer’s desire to own *kené* has positive effects on Shipibo communities beyond commerce. Gómez-Barris suggests that encouraging “curious and ecologically minded foreigners” to perceive “otherwise”—even in the form of a touristic experience—might be the only way to protect the forest. I am inspired by this possibility, by what can happen when *kené* travels across the boundaries between worlds, not as part of the production of a global ontology, but by respecting alterity as the necessary precondition of a cosmos of relational persons. Perhaps over time and with the sharing of forest thought, *kené* will successfully resist

pervasive objectification and commodification.²⁸¹ The Amazonian perspective is ever hopeful; after all, the universe originated in the epidermal designs of Ronin’s back and those kené continue to move through the world, extending the Shipibo universe, which is to extend the “friend-making” process as described by Santos-Granero and discussed in Chapter 3. I would like to believe that we can all be forest.



Figure 4.8. Olinda Silvano Inuma, *Kené*, 2020, acrylic and paper, 21 x 30 cm., Courtesy Dibujos por la Amazonía, 2020, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/peru-artists-amazon-covid-crisis/>.

Dibujos por la Amazonía is a campaign by a group of artists who donate the proceeds of their art to raise both money for Shipibo communities and awareness of COVID-19’s negative and severe impacts on their communities.²⁸² One member of the group is Lima-based Shipibo artist Olinda Silvano Inuma, who herself survived

²⁸¹ Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 36–37.

²⁸² Costa-Kostritsky, “Peruvian Artists.”

the virus. In one of her kené-related works, illustrated here, the design is boldly delineated in saturated colors (Fig. 4.8). Its cross motifs and geometric kené are painted on paper in dark (forest) green, muddled yellow, red, vivid orange, and navy with small white polka dots. There is no representational imagery but rather a call to the much older tradition of symmetry and pattern, which has been carried forward by Shipibo women over centuries. Silvano understands her role in this work, explaining, “Kené art is the cultural identity of the Shipibo women’s world.”²⁸³ While Silvano here expresses in words her collaboration with other Shipibo women, like them, she also *speaks and thinks with* kené and *sees through* kené, envisioning a future, not just for the forest, but for everyone.

²⁸³ Marca Perú, “Olinda Silvano,” video, 3:24, trans. by the author (Feb. 27, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RxJdBBMd_o.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation meditates on the concepts of alterity, materiality, and cultural boundaries with a particular interest in intra-Indigenous concepts of cultural differences and Indigenous/Euro-American encounters; specifically, Inka-Anti and Amazonian-Other relations. I offer materiality as an entry point to discussions of Indigenous notions of cultural differences, and work from two premises: first, that imperial Inkas, Spanish conquistadors, and modern tourists have all entered the Amazon with colonial or colonialist attitudes and practices; and second, that Amazonians resisted and continue resist hegemonic pressures through their particular and strategic use of subject-objects.

As we saw, the Inkas characterized their Anti neighbors as a chaotic Other, but also as a necessary complement to their well-ordered state. While the Inkas could not control the forest, they exerted their power over chonta, a forest material that embodied the Antis and which they could shape and use for their own purposes both before and after Spanish colonization. The Autonomous-era kero embodies a duality; its rough interior and polished and decorated exterior trace the Anti experience of Inka ordering. Following the Spanish advent, the Inkas re-fashioned keros by using mopa mopa to add color, figural imagery, and lustrous invulnerability. They also revised their thinking with regard to Amazonia, imagining the forest as a place of power and refuge. Their figural narratives, often depicting Inkas battling Antis in the forest, recreated the forest as their future home while simultaneously creating a sub-subaltern that would be a common enemy of both Inka and Spaniard.

Both Chapters One and Two focus on the kero with particular attention to its materiality and the ways the wood retains forest associations even after it leaves the Amazon. I also insist on understanding the kero as a subject-object who continued to embody all Antis, even as they engaged the Inkas and then later, the Spaniards. In so doing, I hope to contribute to a decolonial approach to Andean and Amazonian studies that surfaces the submerged perspectives of Inka-Anti relations.

The latter half of this dissertation serves as a pathway for uncovering how Amazonian social actions and encounters speak to perceiving and interacting with others. Chapter Three considers how keros and coqueras, as Amazonian subject-objects, have degrees of subjectivity and agency that work to form amicable relations with others. Amazonians perceived colonial others (both Inkas and Spaniards) as potential threats that needed to be integrated into a network of Amazonian selves and so made known. Chapter Three treats subject-objects, with forest origins but lives outside of it, as they appeal to the human sensorium to create mutually enjoyable experiences. My discussion of keros and coqueras as sensorial subjects reveals how forest materials themselves might have worked to traverse cultural boundaries. Through intersubjective exchanges we see how subject-objects extended the forest's reach outside traditional cartographic and cultural divides.

Chapter Four discusses the sale to tourists of Shipibo textiles with kené, revealing how the forest can resist its objectification through a web of inter-relations. Not only do kené have subjecthood, but they have agency. Kené are pathways for the forest and artist to communicate their desires to turn what is a potential or actual

threat into a “friend” through an ages-old process utilized by Amazonian peoples when dealing with unknown entities. Kené also serve as pathways into the distant past through which we can see how subject-objects acted in Amazonian constructs of alterity. The conclusion to my dissertation leaves open questions about how we can better hear and comprehend Amazonian voices from the past and present.

My dissertation contributes to Andean-Amazonian, and Amazonian-Andean studies, which has barely begun to consider the cultural importance of Amazonia within Inka history. Anthropology, Latin American Studies, Indigenous Studies, Subaltern Studies, Art History, and Visual Studies are just some of the fields to which my dissertation contributes. I introduce new questions and put into play relatively new modes of inquiry, enriching current understandings of how Indigenous cultures themselves have, or have had, Indigenous subalterns, and how intra-Indigenous hierarchies have functioned historically. I also hope to have demonstrated the value of considering the possible subjecthood of objects, particularly those with Amazonian origins.

Although much work remains to be done, I recognize in kené the promise of a fruitful Amazonian concept: that what is usually unseen can be sung and that what is normally inaudible can be visualized. The ways the diverse peoples of Amazonia experience(ed) and respond(ed) to othering processes through sociability, of themselves, and of forest resources, may be better *seen* through *sensing* and, central to my dissertation in Visual Studies, *heard* through *seeing*. I hope this dissertation

serves as a pathway for readers, in their endeavors to better acquaint themselves—and even become friends—with the unknown.

ORTHOGRAPHIC NOTE

In current scholarship, there is little consistency in Quechua orthography. For the most part, I use modern Quechua spellings for Inka words. However, whereas the plural of Quechua nouns is indicated by the suffix *-kuna*, I use an “-s” for clarity (e.g. *keros*, rather than *kerokuna*). Sometimes, especially when relying on colonial sources, I use colonial Spanish spellings, and, on occasion, I use traditional spellings for well-known Quechua words even though they differ from modern Quechua.

With regard to the diverse languages of Amazonia, I use traditional spellings (i.e., those used in the scholarship) corresponding to specific Indigenous groups, and I use Spanish and English to reflect contemporary Indigenous colloquial usages and spelling.

GLOSSARY OF QUECHUA TERMS

Aqha: *Chicha*, a fermented corn drink.

Aquilla: Literally, “precious metal”; also, term for a beaker made of precious metals.

Kamay: The essence of a material.

Kero: Literally, “wood”; also, a wooden beaker.

Maté: Literally, “gourd”: also, a gourd beaker usually used for yerba mate (herbal tea).

Mopa mopa: A forest plant resin used to decorate various wooden objects.

Otorongo: Jaguar.

Q’ariwarmi: Literally, “man-woman,” a fundamental Inka principle, referring to the conjoining of complements which are interdependent. Embedded in the concept is a hierarchy in which the q’ari occupies a position of higher status than warmi.

Sañu: Literally, “fired clay.”

Sapa Inka: Literally, “unique Inka”; a title of the supreme Inka ruler.

Tinku: Space or time in which complements converge.

Tokapu: Inka decoration consisting of geometric configurations, often arranged in a grid and woven into high-prestige garments, as well as rendered in mopa mopa on colonial keros.

Ukhu: Literally, “inner or inside.”

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